

ATTITUDINAL FACTORS RELATED TO THE
DECISION OF ACADEMICALLY CAPABLE
STUDENTS NOT TO PURSUE
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

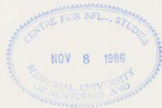
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ATTITUDINAL FACTORS RELATED TO THE
DECISION OF ACADEMICALLY CAPABLE
STUDENTS NOT TO PURSUE
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

by



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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

This study examined attitudinal factors related to the decision of academically capable students not to pursue post-secondary education. Students and their parents were interviewed. It was found that the decision of the individual student was a result of the interaction of many beliefs and their corresponding attitudes. The attitudinal world of the student predisposed the young person to interpret information, form beliefs and modify attitudes in a particular way. The attitudinal effect was a mediational one, which contributed to the selection of an option.

The study identified a sub-group of students with certain characteristics, both familial and attitudinal that led to the rejection of the post-secondary option. Parents were found to share common attitudes with their children and with other parents in the study. The information obtained can be used to identify capable students who will most likely forego the post-secondary option. The findings have implications for career guidance programs as it was found that for many students, their affective and value systems relating to career choices are not being explored and dealt with in effective ways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When a person attempts to complete a project such as this thesis, he or she does not work alone. Inevitably, others are drawn into the process.

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Heather, who became deeply involved both directly and indirectly in my efforts. Without her love, encouragement, faith and understanding the completion of this project would have been impossible.

Sincere thanks are also extended to my family for their support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine attitudinal factors related to the decision of academically capable students in Newfoundland schools who are eligible, but choose not to pursue post-secondary education and training following graduation.

Significance and Rationale

The career decisions students make have consequences for the rest of their lives. However, Breton (1972) has suggested that a person making a career decision:

... is probably unaware of all the factors that impinge on his evaluations and probably even less conscious of the relative weight each experience bears to his current assessments (p. 8).

Powell and Bloom (1966) concluded that an awareness of the motivations underlying students' choices was important if they were to be assisted with their occupational choices.

Kennedy et al. (1981) suggested that students were in an

exploration stage and should have opportunities to "broaden their views and gain information, experiences, and insights which will open up new career possibilities for the future" (p. 11).

The studies mentioned above, and many others, point to the importance of students making career choices based upon self-knowledge, experience and accurate information. It is generally agreed among educators that self-knowledge is one of the most important goals of career guidance programs. A significant aspect of self-knowledge is the understanding an individual has of his/her attitudes towards a career. The knowledge of how other people and experiences effect these attitudes is important as well. The attitudes a person holds will affect the aspirations formed. Deosaran (1976) defines aspiration as "what a student would like to do, or the goal which he would like to attain" (p. 9). Aspiration is important in the career decision-making process because aspiration forms the basis for developing career options. Career options may be thought of as those alternatives related to career which the individual sees as relevant and possible for him/herself. The student would view options as 'realistic' directions in which he/she can move.

Each individual has a 'pool' of aspirations or things he/she would like to do. An evaluation of this pool leads to the formation of career options. The perceived options lead to career choice. If aspirations are limited there is a

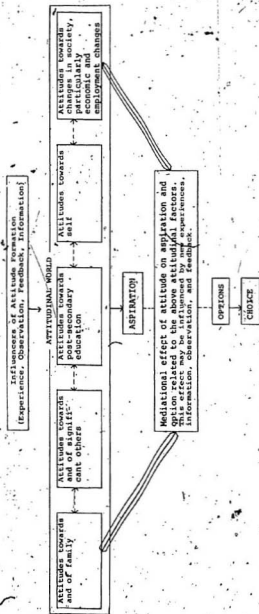
restricted basis upon which to develop options, and hence, restricted career choices result. Wiseman (1982) found that occupational information seeking follows the formation of the aspiration. Therefore, the attitudes an individual has which influence aspirations will be a determinant in the search for vocational information and the subsequent breadth of the individual's occupational knowledge.

The career aspirations a person holds are educational or occupational goals a person would like to attain. The career aspirations a person holds are the result of attitudes and experiences associated with the world of work, the family, education, significant others, economic circumstances, as well as attitudes toward self. The interaction of these attitudinal components leads to the formation of aspiration, and since aspiration leads to the development of options, attitudes also form the basis of perceived options. If attitudes limit aspiration, then attitudes may limit the perception of options open to the student.

In addition to being the basis of aspiration and options, attitudes can function as mediators between aspiration and option. When the individual evaluates aspirations and options, the attitudes held will contribute to this evaluation and thus have an impact upon what is finally decided.

Figure 1 outlines a model of the effect of attitude on aspiration, option and choice. This model demonstrates that attitudes are formed as a result of experience, observation,

Figure 1



feedback and information. These attitudes make up an attitudinal world which relates to career decision making. The attitudinal world is divided into subsets which interact to influence the development of career aspirations. It is from these aspirations that career options develop. However, perceived options are different from aspirations because attitudes mediate the interaction between aspiration and option. For example, although a student might like to achieve certain goals, attitudinal factors may lead him/her to rule out certain aspirations. The options related to this rejected aspiration are also eliminated. The acceptable options are perceived as being more in line with the attitudes held. This mediational effect may be influenced by new experiences, information, observation and feedback because these effect attitude. The evaluation of options leads to career choice.

The model presented may be viewed as a career educational model. It suggests an approach which focuses upon the effect of attitude on career decision making. An important aspect of this model is the difference between aspiration and perceived option. Students often do not follow through with their aspirations because attitudinal factors may restrict which options are perceived as viable. This study was an attempt to examine this restrictive influence of attitude on the formation of aspiration and the perception of options.

Knowledge of which attitudinal factors are most influential in limiting career aspirations and options would

be of great value to educators. This information would identify those attitudes that have to be dealt with if the individual is to be assisted in maximizing his/her abilities and opportunities to the best advantage. Of key importance to this study are those students who appear to qualify for higher educational opportunity, but who do not follow through with this option.

Knowledge of the attitudinal world of these students and how attitude has influenced their aspirations, options and career choice would have implications for career education programs. This information would provide insight into the strategies which could be utilized to help students realize their potential for further study.

Educators, and society in general, place a great emphasis on the development of youth. "Educating its youth is probably society's second most fundamental task - second only to the problem of organizing itself to carry out actions as a society" (Coleman, 1963, p. 1). Conditions in society have changed dramatically in recent years. The most significant changes have come about because of events and circumstances related to economics and employment. These changes have had an effect on the attitudes of high school students and thus have effected the aspirations and plans of these young people.

A comparison of student aspirations over the past decade reveals that substantial shifts have occurred in the aspirations of Newfoundland high school students (Best et al., 1976; Crocker, 1983; Parsons, 1974; Task Force on Education, 1980). A much

larger proportion of students in recent years have planned to continue on to post-secondary education. Despite higher aspiration rates in recent years, the actual participation rates are still very low. For example, in 1980 and 1983, approximately 34% of graduating high school students aspired to attend Memorial University of Newfoundland. Yet, when actual participation rates are investigated, only 12.5% of these Newfoundland students enroll in university (Crocker, 1983; Task Force on Education, 1980). This compares to an average participation rate of 17.5% for Canada in general. Similar trends exist for other post-secondary institutions in the Province. Obviously, there are factors influencing students in such a way that decreases the likelihood that they will attend further education.

The changing conditions of society have not only effected youth, but the important people around the young person, especially the family, have been affected as well. The attitudes of youth are believed to be affected by the family (Breton, 1972; Porter, 1961; Williams, 1972). Knowledge of the effect of family attitudes is important to the educator if the most important career intervention strategies are to be utilized to the benefit of the student.

The attitudes which relate to the family as well as economic and employment changes in society form two subsets of the attitudinal world of the student (see Figure 1). These subsets of attitudes will interact with the other subsets to affect

aspiration and option. The additional attitudinal subsets considered in this study were attitudes towards self, attitudes towards post-secondary education, and attitudes towards and of significant others.

The feelings and attitudes a young person has towards him/herself are a result of information and feedback provided by experience over time. The individual sees him/herself in a certain light. Attitudes about self may affect career aspiration and the evaluation of options. The student who is eligible for post-secondary education but chooses not to pursue this alternative may possess attitudes about self which tend to decrease the possibility of continuing with education. Knowledge of the effect of attitude toward self on career choice would assist school personnel in helping the student overcome the limiting effects of such attitudes.

Whether a person chooses to attend a post-secondary educational institution will be partly dependent upon the perceived worth of further education. Attitudes towards post-secondary education may be influenced by the risk the student attaches to pursuing this aspiration. Therefore, the subset of attitudes related to the worth of post-secondary education was considered an important area of investigation for this study.

The subset of attitudes towards significant others relates to the influence of school and peers on aspiration, option and choice. Studies indicate that the school attended and the teacher may affect career decisions (Cherry, 1974; Knill, 1963;

Peach, 1970). Peer influence is also thought to be important (Pavalko and Bishop, 1966). Knowledge of the nature of the influence of these others on attitude may be important in the determination of interventions designed to help a particular group of students.

The subsets of attitudinal factors referred to above do not exist as separate entities, but interact to form an attitudinal network which impacts upon the career decision-making process. Attitudes are not seen as fixed, but are modified as a result of new experiences and information.

The attitudes held by an individual are unique in the sense that each of us has had different experiences, is exposed to different information, receives different feedback, and exists in a different social and family setting than everyone else. At the same time, many people share similar attitudes, despite these differences. An important question of this study is whether students from two different areas of Newfoundland, who have made a similar decision not to pursue post-secondary education, have similar attitudes which have led to this choice. Also, have these students shared similar experiences which may have led to the formation of similar attitudes? If this is the case, that similar decisions are based upon similar attitudes and backgrounds, the educator is provided with an attitudinal and background profile of those capable students who are most likely to postpone or reject altogether the entry into post-secondary education. This information will have implications

for the career guidance program as it relates to these particular students.

To answer the questions referred to above requires an examination of groups from different geographical, social and economic areas. Selecting academically capable students who have decided not to pursue post-secondary education, from two different areas, will enable the researcher to analyze the effect of attitudinal factors on career choice. Background factors related to family and community can be examined at the same time. Therefore, a comparison of a group of students from a developed, economically stable, modern community with a group from a rural, economically deprived community may provide answers to questions of attitudinal influence. Hence, the importance of the two groups in this study. Conceivably the unique milieu of each of these groups may have had effects on the attitudes of students and others around them. Interviews with these people could provide a picture of how their attitudes have been shaped by the social and economic environment.

Of the two questions referred to above, the effect of similar background characteristics and how these correlate with career choice has been explored to a certain extent (Anisef, 1973; Clark et al., 1969; Porter et al., 1973; Sewell and Shah, 1967). However, this question has not been dealt with to any degree of clarification for this particular group of students in the Newfoundland setting. As attitude is regarded as a result of situation in some respects, this question needs to be answered on a local basis.

The second question of the actual attitudes held by this group of students and the effect of these attitudes on post-secondary choice has not been examined previously in the Newfoundland setting. Studies have indicated that attitude is important (Deosaran, 1976; Wiseman, 1982). However, what these attitudinal factors are and their effects on aspiration and perceived option has not been determined for these students.

Newfoundland and Labrador is a province not rich in a variety of manufacturing, service or technical industries. The goal of career education must be to enable youth to take advantage of whatever opportunity is available. If students possess attitudes which limit the perception of aspiration, option and hence opportunity, they may not be prepared to exploit developments that do occur. Significant numbers of Newfoundland youth may be ready only to take advantage, over the short-term, of semi-skilled and unskilled jobs that disappear very quickly. In addition, they will have to compete for these few jobs with many other people. What they have decided originally may have negative repercussions for the rest of their lives. This is especially important for the group of students under investigation in this study, because they appear to have the academic ability to proceed with post-secondary education which would enhance their opportunities. If interventions are to be organized to confront the limiting effects of attitude, knowledge of these attitudes must first be obtained. The purpose of this study was to provide this information.

The exploratory nature of this research will result in an identification of further research areas. This will lead to a greater understanding of youth and the factors and attitudes they hold and how these effect career decisions.

Research Questions

The following research questions were derived from a review of literature related to attitude and career choice. The questions are stated in broad terms because this study is exploratory in nature and intends to identify areas which need to be examined in greater detail in future research. The questions represent an examination of the attitudinal world of young people and how the attitudinal factors within this world effect the post high school aspirations and plans of the students in the study.

1. Are there common, shared attitudes among academically capable young people with respect to the decision not to pursue post-secondary education following graduation from high school?
 - (a) Do these students share common attitudes which reflect the influence of family on choice?
 - (b) Do these students share common attitudes which reflect the influence of significant others on the choice of what route to follow after high school?
 - (c) Do the students in the study have common attitudes towards post-secondary education?
 - (d) Do these students have similar attitudes toward self which may have influenced the career decision?

- (e) Do these students have similar attitudes towards economic and employment circumstances that may have had an effect on the career decision-making process?
2. What parental attitudes toward post-secondary plans are reported by qualified students who plan no post-secondary education?
 - (a) Are parental attitudes towards the post high school decision consistent with the attitudes of their children?
 - (b) Do the parents of the students under investigation possess similar attitudes with respect to the post high school plans of their children?
 3. Do the students under study have background features that might impact on attitude and hence, on aspiration and career plans?
 - (a) Are the families in similar financial and employment circumstances?
 - (b) Do the families share similar educational backgrounds?
 - (c) What is the influence of role model on the attitude towards career direction and choice?
 - (d) Has work experience on the part of students had an effect on their attitudes towards post high school plans?
 - (e) Does the sex of the student bear any relationship to the outcome of the post high school decision, within the groups of students studied?
 4. Are there other differences about attitudes between the two groups of students, from different parts of Newfoundland?
 - (a) Are there differences in the proportion of students who have elected not to pursue post-secondary education, in each setting?
 - (b) Within each group studied, are there differences in terms of whether post-secondary education is still seen as a possibility, if not immediately, then for some time in the future?
 5. What attitudinal factors are specified by the students as being most influential and important in their decision of not to pursue post-secondary education?

Definition of Terms

Career Aspiration: A particular educational or occupational goal a person desires to attain.

Career Options: Educational and occupational alternatives which a person sees as relevant and possible for him/herself.

Attitude: A learned, general predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object or event. Attitude is viewed as affective and evaluative in nature.

Belief: A person's information about an object or event. A belief links an object to some attribute.

Academically Capable: Those students whose high school academic performance is such that they meet or exceed the entrance requirements of Memorial University of Newfoundland. By meeting these standards, students are also eligible to apply for other forms of post-secondary education such as trades and technical schools.

Post-Secondary Plans: Post-secondary plans refer to the choices available to a student on completion of the grade twelve high school program.

Attitudinal World: That collection of attitudes that may have an influence on the career direction of a person. These attitudes are seen as interacting with other attitudes to determine outcome.

Limitations of the Study

This study holds relevance for the Newfoundland region and, in particular, the two settings studied. Any generalizations to other regions should be made in light of the fact that the areas studied are unique.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature is organized around three major sections. It was felt that material presented in these three sections is essential to the understanding of the influence of attitude on the post-secondary decision. Section one deals with theories of attitude. Many theories have been derived to explain the impact of attitude on behaviour. The theory found to be most applicable to this study was that proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Other attitude theories are described as these shed light on alternative explanations of attitudinal influence. These theories also suggest interventions which might be implemented to effect attitude change.

The second section deals with attitude change. This is a more practical application as it indicates ways to go about affecting the attitudes of young people by effective means.

The third section sheds light on factors that have been found to be related to aspiration, the perception of options and career choice. Within the framework of this study, attitudes are thought to be the basis of aspirations and options and so have an effect on career choice. Therefore, if these factors

are associated with aspiration, option and choice they may be associated with attitude. Relevant findings which pertain to socioeconomic status, educational level of parents, parental income, place of residence, self-evaluation, peer group influence, school influence and sex are presented.

Throughout this review attempts were made to apply the literature to the present study.

Attitude Theory

Few investigators agree on an explicit definition of attitude. The range of proposed definitions of attitude have been made explicit in reviews of the attitude concept (Campbell, 1963; Greenwald et al., 1968). Two of the most commonly cited definitions of attitude include those proposed by Kerlinger and Rokeach. Kerlinger (1967) defines an attitude as:

An enduring structure of descriptive and evaluative beliefs that predispose the individual to behave selectively toward the referent of the attitude (p. 110).

Rokeach (1968) proposed the following definition of attitude:

An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of interrelated beliefs that describe, evaluate, and advocate action with respect to an object or situation, with each belief having cognitive, affective and behavioural components (p. 132).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggest that most investigators would agree that attitude can be described as:

A learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object (p. 6).

These definitions appear to share common features including that attitudes are learned beliefs that they predispose action, and that such actions are consistently favourable or unfavourable toward the object of the attitude. That attitudes are learned reflects the importance of past experience which influences the behaviour of the individual. Attitudes are generally assumed to constitute the person's representation of past experience (Campbell, 1963). Predispositions to respond in consistently favourable or unfavourable ways are assumed to be the product of experience. The attitudes a person holds towards post-secondary education are a result of experiences related to the family, school, peers, community and so on. These attitudes predispose the student to respond favourably or unfavourably towards factors associated with post-secondary education such as the financing of further education, the value of further education and other factors.

Stebbins (1975) defined predispositions as "products of past experience which impinge upon our awareness, equip us with specific, usually habitual, views of the world and guide behaviour in the immediate present" (p. 12). In some instances it may be difficult to determine which prior experiences are relevant to the formation of the predisposition. Therefore, the predispositions of students towards post-secondary education will be reflected in their choices.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) make distinctions between three types of consistency. Stimulus-response consistency may be taken as reflecting an attitude toward the object. However, this definition does not distinguish attitude from other concepts such as habit, trait, drive or motive. Response-response consistency also indicates an attitude toward the object but involves the degree of consistency between different responses with respect to the same object. This definition fails to discriminate between attitude, trait, motive and other concepts. Evaluative consistency is related to multiple behaviours at different points in time. On different occasions a person may perform different behaviours with respect to an object. The overall pattern, though, may remain relatively constant and so may be defined as consistent. "Evaluative or affective consistency is what distinguishes between attitude and other concepts, and it is therefore hardly surprising that the evaluative dimension has frequently been regarded as the most distinctive feature of attitude" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). It is this evaluative nature of attitude that is of importance to this study. This reflects the idea that attitudes towards post-secondary education may result in different behaviours because attitudes towards this object are re-evaluated. The different evaluations may be the result of new information or because of varying circumstances.

For the purpose of this study the concept of attitude will be placed in the classification suggested by Fishbein and Ajzen

(1975) which consists of four broad categories: affect (feelings, evaluations), cognition (opinions, beliefs), conation (behavioural intentions), and behaviour (observed overt acts). Attitude pertains to a person's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of an object. Beliefs represent the information a person has about the object and connects an object to some attribute. Behavioural intention refers to a person's intentions to perform various behaviours. The strength of an intention is reflected in the person's subjective probability that he/she will perform the specified behaviour. Behaviour refers to the observable acts of the person. A behaviour may be studied in isolation or may be used to infer beliefs, attitudes or intentions.

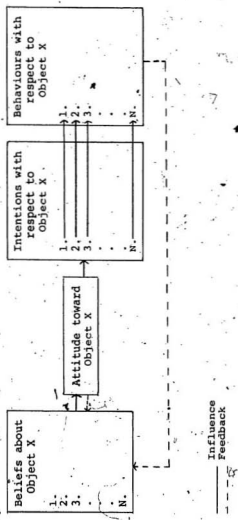
Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) propose the following conceptual model which relates beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours to a given object (Figure 2).

In this model beliefs are seen as the basic building blocks of the conceptual framework. A person learns or forms a number of beliefs about an object based upon observation or information received from outside sources or by various inference processes. All of a person's beliefs serve as the informational base that determines his/her attitudes, intentions and behaviours.

A person's attitude toward an object is founded on his/her salient beliefs about that object, in this case, education. This involves information processing. A person's attitude is determined by his/her beliefs that education has certain

Figure 2

Schematic Presentation of Conceptual Framework*



*Adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 15.

attributes and by his/her evaluations of these attributes.

Salient beliefs about education may be derived from information about the "risks" of continuing education, financial considerations, family expectations and the view of self with respect to education.

In terms of career choice, the beliefs a person has about post-secondary education will be a function of the information available to him/her. The most salient beliefs are filtered through the belief structure by a processing of the vocational, self, family and situational information available. In this processing attributes are attached to the career direction considered, and an evaluation of these attributes is made. Based upon this evaluation a decision is made.

An attitude toward an object is viewed as related to the individual's intentions to perform a range of behaviours with respect to that object. Each intention is seen as being related to the corresponding behaviour.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975):

It should be clear that since a person's attitude is assumed to be related to the total affect associated with his/her beliefs, intentions and behaviours, we define response consistency in terms of overall evaluative consistency. Thus, attitude is viewed as a general predisposition that does not predispose the person to perform any specific behaviour. Rather it leads to a set of intentions that indicate a certain amount of affect toward the object in question. Each of these intentions is related to a specific behaviour and thus, the overall affect expressed by the pattern of a person's actions with respect to the object also corresponds to his/her attitude toward the object (p. 15).

In the case of the students under study in this research the attitudes held led to a set of intentions related to not attending post-secondary education. These intentions reflected the feeling students must have had towards post-secondary education - that there were negative consequences of pursuing further education. Viable options were those not involving post-secondary education. The findings of this study will lead to a greater understanding of the evaluative aspect of attitudes which influence the career decision-making process.

Once established an attitude may have an effect upon the formation of new beliefs. Performance of a specific behaviour may lead to new beliefs which may in turn influence the attitude. For the students in question, it seems that based upon this framework, the attitudes formed earlier in life may now influence their perception of new information, the beliefs held, other attitudes, the intention to carry out a behaviour and the affect associated with post-secondary education. Therefore, the early experiences of the student such as family events and circumstances may influence later attitudes towards the object, which in this case is post-secondary education.

A person's intention to carry out a behaviour is a function of certain beliefs. His/her attitude toward carrying out a specific behaviour is related to his/her beliefs that performing the behaviour will lead to certain consequences and an evaluation of those consequences. Therefore, attitude is viewed as one major determinant of the person's intention to perform the

behaviour in question. The intention to attend a post-secondary educational institution is related to and affected by beliefs and attitudes which influence an evaluation of the consequences of pursuing education.

Other beliefs relevant for a behavioural intention are beliefs of a normative nature. That is, beliefs that certain referents think the person should or should not perform the specified behaviour. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975):

The normative beliefs and motivation to comply lead to normative pressures. The totality of these normative pressures may be termed 'subjective norms.' Like his/her attitude toward a behaviour, a person's subjective norm is viewed as a major determinant of his/her intention to perform the behaviour (p. 16).

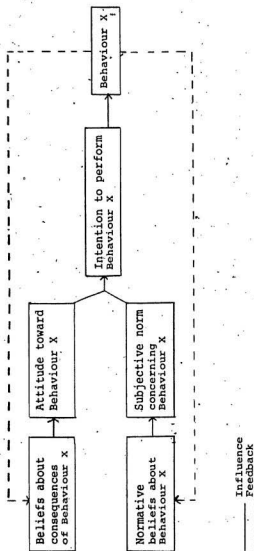
An individual's behavioural intention is viewed as a function of the two factors of the attitude toward the behaviour and the subjective norm. The intention is the immediate determinant of the corresponding behaviour.

The factors influencing intentions and behaviour are diagrammed in Figure 3.

It is probable that the normative beliefs of the student are influenced by the beliefs of key people around them. Key referents may include parents, siblings, friends, teachers or other significant persons. These people have likely communicated, in some fashion, what they think the student should or should not do. It is possible that the normative beliefs of others have influenced students to not pursue post-secondary education. A

Figure 3

Factors Influencing Intentions and Behaviour*



* Adapted from Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 16.

rationalization process may have occurred to evaluate aspirations and options in light of these normative beliefs. This rationalization process may be explained by theories which follow in the next section. Osgood and Tannenbaum's (1955) Congruity Theory and Festinger's (1957) Cognitive Dissonance Theory may prove to be especially relevant to this rationalization process. In any case, the normative beliefs of referents may place pressure on the student to move in a certain direction.

The totality of these normative pressures, the subjective norms, will likely influence the intention of whether to attend or reject post-secondary education as a viable option. In association with learned attitudes, the subjective norm operates to control behaviour (see Figure 3). For these students attitudes and subjective norms, in combination, have led to the non-attendance option.

It is the intention of this study to examine the nature of the attitudes towards attending post-secondary education and the subjective norms of the students and how these have influenced the intention with respect to further education. Subjective norms may largely be a product of parental beliefs. This study will not only concern itself with students, but with their parents as well.

Other Theories of Attitude

Just as there are many different definitions of attitude, there are many theories which attempt to explain attitude and its effect upon the individual. A review of these theories is helpful as they lead to further understanding of attitude. An attempt will be made to relate these other theories to the framework of attitude proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) which is being utilized in this study to explain and clarify aspects of attitude and attitudinal influence.

Learning Theory

Leonard Doob (1947), in one of the first applications of learning theory to the attitude area, defined attitude as a learned, implicit anticipatory response. Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957) argued that the implicit mediating response represents the meaning of the object. They suggested that attitude refers only to the evaluative part of the total meaning response.

Learning theorists of attitude are mainly concerned with the acquisition of attitudes. Staats (1968), and Staats and Staats (1958) approach the acquisition of attitude by using primary and higher-order classical conditioning as the basic processes. Lott and Lott (1968) emphasized instrumental conditioning as well as classical conditioning as a basis for

attitude formation. Lott (1955) also specified mediated generalization as an important part of attitude acquisition. This principle implies that when an overt response and the implicit reaction are associated with a given stimulus, any other stimulus that elicits the same mediating reaction will also produce the overt response.

Doob (1947) stated that a person first learns an implicit mediating response, or attitude, to a given stimulus. He/she must then learn to make a specific overt response to the attitude. Doob distinguished between attitudinal response and other mediating responses meaning that people with the same attitude may learn to behave differently. Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957) accounted for low attitude-behaviour relations by pointing out that attitude is only a part of the total implicit response, and therefore people may differ on other dimensions of stimulus meaning.

Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) proposed the congruity principle to describe the combination of stimuli. This principle states that whenever two stimuli are combined, the mediating reaction characteristic of each, shifts toward congruence with the characteristic of the other.

Fishbein (1963, 1967) has proposed a model that refers to the methods by which evaluative mediating responses combine to produce the overall attitude. A stimulus object may elicit a number of responses which refer to the qualities of the object. These stimulus-response associations are learned through

conditioning processes. The various responses to the object are seen as making a "habit-family hierarchy," in which the responses are ordered in terms of the probability that they will be elicited by the stimulus object. The hierarchy is established by the strength of associations with the stimulus object.

In terms of the intent of this study, the students may be thought of as having responses which refer to the qualities they perceive as belonging to the object in question, which is post-secondary choice. These responses have become associated over time. The response elicited depends on how strongly this association has become. If the strongest associations are made with favourable responses to attend a post-secondary institution, this path will be followed.

Expectancy-Value Theories

According to Tolman (1932), people learn expectations which are beliefs that a certain response will be followed by some event. Events could be either positive or negative. He argued that people would learn to carry out behaviour that they expected to lead to positive-reinforcers.

Edwards (1954) proposed that when a person has to make a behavioural choice, he/she will select the alternative which is likely to lead to the most favourable outcomes.

Rosenberg (1965) defined attitude as a "relatively stable, affective response to an object" and argued that this attitude is "accompanied by a cognitive structure made up of beliefs about the potentialities of that object for attaining or blocking the realization of valued states" (p. 367). Later Rosenberg (1965) expanded this definition by including an explicit statement of affective-cognitive consistency. He believed that people have a need to achieve and maintain affective-cognitive consistency.

This expectancy-value approach is similar to the Fishbein and Ajzen notion of factors which effect the intention to perform a certain behaviour. One component of this is the perceived consequences of moving in a particular direction. For this study, the question is one of the nature of how students evaluated the consequences of proceeding on to post-secondary education. The expectations they have for the options available will undoubtedly have an impact on the choice made. It seems that the students will have made their decision based upon what they saw as the most favourable outcomes for the choices open to them. Tied closely to this evaluation is the value system of the particular student. The perceived consequences of a decision will be assessed based upon the values the student holds. How these students perceive the consequences of post-secondary education, therefore, becomes an important consideration for the educator who is attempting to facilitate career choice.

Congruity Theory

Osgood and Tannenbaum's (1955) congruity principle has been applied to the formation and modification of attitudes. In addition, it has been extended to other cognitive areas such as interpersonal impression formation (Triandis and Fishbein, 1963; Willis, 1960) and other complex social stimuli (Podell and Podell, 1963).

This theory is typically applied to a situation in which an identifiable source makes an assertion about some concept or object. Prior to exposure to such a message the individual has attitudes toward any number of potential sources or concepts. The issue of congruity arises with the assertion of the message and it is then that the particular source and the particular concept are brought into an evaluational relationship to each other as the source assumes a position favourable or unfavourable to the concept. Under certain circumstances there is no incongruity and no pressure toward change is generated. Under other circumstances incongruity arises and pressure is generated to change the attitudes toward the objects of judgement involved, in order to achieve congruity. Thus, change always depends on the pre-communication attitudes toward both objects and on the nature of the assertion linking them. The theory predicts the direction of attitude change as always toward increased congruity.

This theory sheds some light on possible explanations of

student attitudes towards post-secondary education. Prior to the debate over whether or not to go on to post-secondary education, the individual already has attitudes towards aspects of higher education. When the decision has to be made about this career path, the student is placed in an evaluative relationship and has to examine the decision in light of both where and who messages about post-secondary education have come, as well as the actual object of post-secondary education itself. If both his/her referents and his/her perception of the object (further education) are in agreement no incongruity results. If the two disagree, incongruity occurs and the student has to try to resolve this incongruity. With incongruity, the student must change his attitudes towards the message referent (family, peers, teachers, media) or towards the issue of post-secondary education itself. This theory also points to possible methods of attitude change. This would involve attempting to create incongruity and then guiding the person by providing further messages for evaluation.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Festinger (1957) proposed a theory of cognitive dissonance which considers the relations between two cognitive elements. These elements refer to the things a person knows about him/herself, his/her behaviour and his/her environment. Three kinds of relations may exist between any two cognitive elements -

dissonance, consonance and irrelevance. According to Festinger, a dissonant relation exists if, considering two cognitive elements alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other. A consonant relation exists if, considering a pair of elements, either one does follow from the other. If a relation exists in which one cognitive element implies nothing at all concerning some other element, the two are irrelevant to one another.

The main idea of dissonance theory was stated by Festinger (1957) as follows:

The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.... The strength of the pressure to reduce the dissonance is a function of the magnitude of the dissonance (pp. 3, 8).

The magnitude of dissonance increases with the importance of the elements to the person. A given element may have relevant relations to more than one other element.

A dissonant relation creates psychological tension which motivates the person to reduce the dissonance and try to achieve consonance. Dissonance can be completely eliminated if one of the two elements is changed. However, it may sometimes be impossible to change either of the cognitive elements in a dissonant relation. If this occurs the individual may reduce the magnitude of dissonance in one of two ways - the person may add new cognitive elements that are consonant with the element in question or may reduce the importance of one or both elements.

Festinger (1957) described four basic situations that give rise to cognitive dissonance. These are decision making; forced compliance, voluntary and involuntary exposure to dissonant information and disagreement with other persons. When a person makes a choice, dissonance is assumed to exist. The knowledge that the unchosen alternatives have favourable aspects and the knowledge that the chosen alternative has unfavourable characteristics, are both dissonant with his/her knowledge of his/her choice. Dissonance may be reduced by enhancing one's positive beliefs about the chosen alternative. Decreasing the subjective value placed on the unchosen alternative will also reduce dissonance. The magnitude of post-decision dissonance is a function of the importance of the decision and of the degree to which chosen and unchosen alternatives are similar in attractiveness.

In a forced compliance situation, a person is induced to carry out a behaviour that is inconsistent with his/her beliefs or attitudes. The magnitude of dissonance is inversely related to the amount of threatened punishment or promised reward. The greater the justification for the behaviour, the less dissonance is aroused. Dissonance can be reduced by changing the belief so that it becomes consonant with behaviour.

Such a theory of attitude may explain the process a student goes through when trying to decide what to do after high school. There are several alternatives, each with both favourable and unfavourable characteristics. Since the decision is considered

an important one, it can be assumed that the magnitude of dissonance is high. To reduce the dissonance aroused by this situation, the student must evaluate the punishment and reward of each element. From this evaluation a decision is made. The dissonance following the decision can be lessened by the student in a number of ways as referred to above. The student will attempt to justify his/her behaviour and may do so by changing beliefs about post-secondary education and the options available to make them consonant with the decision made and the resulting behaviour.

This phenomenon poses a problem with research such as this study, because subjects are being examined after the decision has been made. The information, beliefs and attitudes expressed by students may be a reflection of the effects of attempting to resolve dissonance and may not truly or as accurately get at the student's attitudinal frame of reference before making the decision. The interview approach used in this study is an attempt to overcome this difficulty as it will allow the interviewer to probe the subjects until satisfied that the issue at hand has been examined satisfactorily.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue that cognitive elements are equivalent to what they had defined as beliefs and that consonance and dissonance refer to the relations between beliefs. Relations between beliefs may influence attitudes, intentions or behaviours. Therefore, changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours are all influenced in a like manner by dissonant relations.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is concerned with inferences about stable dispositions of people based on information about or direct observation of their actions. This theory deals with specifying the conditions under which attributions to a person will or will not be made. A distinction has been made between internal and external attribution (Heider, 1958). Internal attribution means that a person's behaviour is attributed to some internal factor or characteristic of the person and inferences can be made about the person's stable characteristics. External attribution means that a person's behaviour is attributed to some external factor and so no inferences can be made about the person's stable characteristics.

Much of the work on attribution theory centers around personal causality which refers to instances in which a person is perceived to have caused a certain event intentionally. According to Heider (1958) internal attributions are made only under conditions of personal causality when the action is perceived to be purposive. Jones and Davis (1965) focused on personal causality. According to this approach, attribution of a disposition to an actor is based on the observation of his/her action and its consequences or effects. Two factors are assumed to influence the degree to which the actor will be perceived to have intended a given action. The first condition is the assumption of knowledge on the part of the actor. The

second condition in the inference process is the assumption of ability on the part of the actor. For intention to be inferred the actor must be perceived to have had the knowledge that the effects would result from his/her action and the ability to produce the effects.

Most of the work on attribution theory centers on the factors that influence the confidence with which such attributions are made. Jones and Davis (1956) indicate that the certainty of attributions depends on two factors - the desirability of the effects produced by the action and the degree to which these effects are common to other behavioural alternatives available.

Kelly (1972) identified three major factors that influence attribution: (1) Consistency - the degree to which the actor performs the same behaviour toward an object on different occasions. The more consistent his/her behaviour, the more likely it is that an internal attribution will be made; (2) Distinctiveness - the degree to which the actor performs different behaviours with respect to different objects. The lower the distinctiveness, the more likely it is that an internal attribution will be made; (3) Consensus - the degree to which other actors perform the same behaviour with respect to a given object. Internal attribution decreases with consensus.

Other factors, such as the actor's perceived decision freedom and the prior probability of his/her behaviour, have also been suggested as determinants of the possibility that an

attribution will be made (Steiner, 1970). Heider (1958) and others have pointed out that factors residing in the observer may also affect attributions. Therefore, a person's attitudes may influence his/her perception of causal units.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) view attribution theory as dealing with the formation and change of beliefs. Beliefs are seen as inferences about the causes of observed events or about a person's stable dispositions. Principles of attribution theory concern the degree to which observing a person's behaviour influences beliefs about him/her or his/her surroundings.

The student is an observing, reacting being. The attitudes he/she has may influence the perception of the intentional behaviours he/she carries out. By observing his/her behaviours and their effects, over time, the student attributes certain dispositions or characteristics to him/herself. The attribution of characteristics to self and the behavioural alternatives (in this case, the alternatives associated with post high school plans) will depend upon the consistency of his/her behavioural responses towards post-secondary education (for example, the frequency and depth of career information examined), the different behaviours carried out with respect to planning for post-secondary education or some other alternative, and the observations made of other people when confronting the same issue. This approach emphasizes the need for the student to be in touch with his/her own feelings, abilities, behaviours and so on. Significant others become important because attributions

are made partly on the basis of the observation of others and drawing conclusions from this. The individual, when making the career choice, makes inferences about the causes of events he/she has observed and the individuals involved in these observations. These inferences result in the formation and change of beliefs, which lead to a decision based upon these beliefs.

For the students in this study, the decision not to pursue post-secondary education may have come about because of inferences made about the value of education. Not the least of the possible inferences are inferences about self. The inferences a person makes about him/herself, when considered within the framework of post-secondary education, may have resulted in the formation of certain beliefs. These beliefs led to the selection of the non-attendance option. Other inferences made could have been associated with the risks of continuing education; economic and employment factors, family conditions and peer influence.

Summary of Attitude Theories

The theories reviewed above differ in many ways. They differ in terms of the variables that play a dominant role in the theory, in the interrelation of variables, and in terms of focusing on processes of formation and/or change of the variables. Since different variables are involved, some of the theories deal with relations between beliefs. Most theories are concerned

with the relations between belief and attitudes (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

Some theories are information processing models whereas others postulate a dynamic process where information affects beliefs or attitudes if some inconsistency exists among variables. This suggests that most of these theories are concerned with information. The information may be about an object or about one's own beliefs, attitudes, intentions or behaviours toward the object. Both types of information may be gained through direct observation or by some means of communication. Despite all the theories dealing with information about the object, only a few deal with information about the self (for example, attribution theory).

If information is important in theories of attitude, then the information possessed by a student with respect to post-secondary education and self is an important determinant in the decision of what to do following high school. Further understanding of the effect of the information base of a student on his/her career decisions of a post-secondary nature is an important aspect of this study.

Attitude Change

The effect of certain attitudes is negative in terms of the decision-making processes of the individual. For example,

unrealistic, negative attitudes about self may result in decisions that are counterproductive for the person. Changing these negative attitudes is one of the purposes of counselling. To change attitude the helper must first identify the hindering attitude and then have strategies in hand which will most effectively change the attitudes in question.

Generally speaking, theories based on information processing deal directly with processes of formation and so have immediate implications for change. Learning theories and expectancy-value theories focus on the effect of information on attitudes whereas attribution theories deal with the effects of information on beliefs. Theories of a dynamic nature focus on change without great concern for the formation of beliefs or attitudes.

Inferential beliefs are formed on the basis of other beliefs a person holds. Change in an inferential belief can, therefore, be brought about by changing some or all of the relevant beliefs that provide the basis for the inference process. Studies by McGuire (1960) and others have shown that an inferential belief can be influenced by changing a target belief. However, the amount of change in an inferential belief depends upon other factors: (1) It depends on the strength of the relationship between target and inferential beliefs, and (2) impact effects on external primary beliefs have to be accounted for.

Attitudes can be changed by changing one or more of the existing salient beliefs, by introducing new salient beliefs,

or, by changing the person's evaluations of the attributes.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975):

Beliefs about the object and attribute evaluations can therefore be viewed as two different determinants of attitude at which an influence attempt can be directed Irrespective of the strategy used, in order to understand the effects of an influence attempt on a dependent measure of attitude, one must know its effects on the person's salient belief hierarchy (pp. 398-399).

Changing certain beliefs or attitudes will have an effect on a person's intention to perform a behaviour. The problem is to identify the attitudes and beliefs relevant for a given intention. Such is the purpose of this study.

The immediate determinant of a given behaviour is the intention to perform that behaviour. To change a person's behaviour it is necessary to change his/her intention to perform that behaviour. However, an influence attempt that changes intention may not always lead to behavioural change. To be maximally effective the intention and the behavioural criterion should correspond exactly with respect to their levels of specificity. It is also important to keep in mind that events may intervene between the change in intention and the actual performance of the behaviour. Intervening events may produce unexpected changes in intention which may prevent the desired behaviour. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) outline three options to increase the likelihood of instigating a successful influence attempt. First, an investigator can select a behavioural criterion which is likely to be paired with a stable intention.

Second, the investigator can try to prevent the occurrence of intervening events. Third, the investigator can try to counteract the intervening event when it cannot be prevented.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) describe basic guidelines for change, irrespective of the dependent variable under consideration:

- (1) The effects of an influence attempt on change in a dependent variable depend on its effects on the primary beliefs underlying that variable.
- (2) The effects of an influence attempt on change in a dependent variable are ultimately the result of changes in proximal beliefs and of impact effects.
- (3) The effects of an influence attempt on change in beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours depend, in that order, on an increasing number of intervening processes (pp. 406-408).

The above points have to be considered and applied effectively if beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviours are to be changed with respect to the decision of which direction to pursue after the completion of high school. The findings of this study will hopefully, identify attitudes that keep students from fulfilling their academic potential to a greater extent and in so doing will point to the most potentially effective strategies for dealing with this aspect of career education.

Factors Related to Aspiration, Option and Career Choice

A review of the literature sheds light on factors that

have been found to be related to aspiration, the perception of options and career choice. Within the framework of this study, attitudes are thought to be the basis of aspirations and options as well as a mediator between the two and so have an effect on career choice. If these factors are associated with aspiration, option and choice then they may well be associated with attitude. A review of these factors is, therefore, necessary if the context of the effect of attitudes on the career decision-making process are to be understood.

Socioeconomic Status

Differences in the socioeconomic status and background of individuals is extremely relevant to education. Coleman (1963) indicated that socioeconomic status was the major cause of variations among students. Friesen (1969) highlighted the importance of socioeconomic status by stating:

The most significant difference in this area occurred between the socioeconomic groups. Almost three times as many students in the high socioeconomic group than in the low one had plans for university or college, while over four times as many in the low group than in the high group excluded higher education from other plans (p. 52).

Porter et al. (1973) examined educational accessibility and equality of Ontario high school students. The study demonstrated that when parents were asked how they saw their children's educational futures, financial concerns were primary, although many non-financial and cultural factors were considered.

The study found that there was a striking relationship between social class as measured on a scale of father's occupation, education and income, and other aspects of education. Schoenfeldt (1968) reported that socioeconomic status had direct effects on the post high school educational decisions of students. Students from higher socioeconomic levels were more likely to opt for post-secondary education. Sewell and Shah (1967) found that when intelligence was controlled for, socioeconomic status was positively and significantly related to planning for college. Krippner (1963) found that although students may prefer different vocations, they will reflect the family's occupational and socioeconomic level.

It is evident from these studies that socioeconomic status influences the post high school decision. It is possible that the formation and evolution of attitudes are influenced by factors and conditions related to socioeconomic status. Therefore, socioeconomic factors are of interest in this study. Students and parents interviewed came from two very different economic areas. These areas yield varying socioeconomic levels. This approach may lead to information on the relationship between socioeconomic status and attitudes towards post-secondary education for the Newfoundland students involved.

Educational Level of Parents

Breton (1972), in a nation-wide study of social and

academic factors in the career decisions of Canadian youth found the most important background factors to be father's occupational status, the education of the parents, the size of the community of residence, the region of the country, the size of the family, birth order and the overall pattern of authority between parents and children. Hunter (1972) found that the mother's educational attainment is directly related to the parent's and teacher's expectations of the child. The higher the educational level of the mother, the more teachers and parents expected educationally of the child. Osborn (1971) demonstrated that students tended to achieve and have attitudes, aspirations and expectations consistent with the educational level of their same-sex parent. Anderson (1980) found similar results and concluded that parental education was important and found strong support for the importance of the same-sex parent. Rehberg et al. (1967) suggested that the father's education is a partial determinant of a student's occupation and hence, the social status of the family, that paternal education and occupation influenced adolescent educational expectancies both through parental encouragement and independently of it.

Parental Income

Parental income is an indicator of socioeconomic status and has been used to examine the parental influence on the decision-making process of the student. Little (1967) reported

that membership in a family in the upper third of the income range was associated with students' attainment of high prestige occupations. McPhee (1959) showed that family income and parental interest in the student's education was related as those parents in the higher income brackets also were higher in school approval. As parental income will be affected by the presence of a working mother, such a situation may have effects on the career decisions of youth. Banducci (1967) found that children of working mothers tended to have higher educational aspirations and expectations than children of non-working mothers.

In a study of traditionalism and career choice, Wiseman (1982) found that in the Newfoundland sample, the students who were associated with non-traditionalism had fathers whose occupations were technical, fishing, or logging. A more traditional career choice was observed when the father's occupation was technical. When mother's occupation was considered, students associated with traditionalism had mothers who had technical jobs, sales, owner, or manager. Non-traditional choice was associated with mothers who were in service and recreation, fishing, and to a lesser degree, home duties and professional occupations. It might be the case that traditional career choice is related to income because the occupation selected may determine income. Many traditional jobs in Newfoundland are characterized by low income. Non-traditional jobs may offer greater financial rewards.

The pattern of seasonal employment which is reflected in many Newfoundland families results in generally low incomes. Perhaps this condition shapes attitudes towards aspiration, option and occupational choice.

Place of Residence

The family's place of residence has long been considered an influencing factor on the adolescent's decision-making process. With respect to the urban centers, educational opportunities in the rural areas have been considered inadequate. Studies completed in Canada by Narine (1971), Peach (1970) and Strohschein (1971) established that a significant relationship existed between community of residence and post-secondary educational aspirations. Narine found a significant relationship between perceived parental attitude towards post-secondary education and their place of residence. The more urban the place of residence the more positive the attitudes towards post-secondary education. Peach found that student achievement expectations differed when related to school size and location. Rural students, from smaller schools, displayed relatively lower achievement expectations for themselves. Their urban counterparts expected to achieve more. Strohschein proposed that the closeness of a post-secondary institution was favourably related to students continuing their education after high school. The actual contact and knowledge of local

examples of post-secondary educational institutions seems to increase the chances that the student will opt to continue with further education after high school. A study by Wiseman (1982) found that in a Newfoundland sample, traditionalism of career choice was related to the place of residence. As the aspirations formed by students are influenced by the place of residence, the options perceived to be open to students will also be influenced by the place of residence.

Porter et al. (1973), after comparing the aspirations of 3000 grades eight, ten and twelve Toronto students with students from other parts of Ontario, wrote:

There was scarcely any difference between students in Toronto and other major urban centers. However, we found that for each level of urbanization, the lower the social class the lower the educational aspirations To be lower class and rural provides an extra handicap. (p. 68).

This urban-rural bias in terms of educational aspirations and actual attainment is supported by other Ontario (Breton, 1972; Clark et al., 1969), Canadian (Cuneo and Curtis, 1975) and American (Elder, 1963) research.

The Porter (1973) study concluded:

It is clear from our analysis that urbanization is related to educational aspirations ... and that rural life is not conducive to continuing one's education as urban life (p. 70).

From this evidence, and based upon the framework of this study, the rural-urban differences in aspiration and the evaluation of options are related to the attitudes that each different setting influences. The attitudes held by the

individual in any particular setting are effected by the experiences in that setting. Pike (1970) expressed the educational implications of this community differential:

A concomitant of the rural and small town environment is a set of values, beliefs and ways of doing things, i.e., a subculture, which adversely affects access to higher education Rural life tends to be oriented to the concrete and the practical, and actively discourages the creation of the theoretical and abstract cast of mind which is (or is supposed to be) inseparable from involvement in higher education (p. 73).

This quote sheds some light on the nature of the effect of rural life on the higher education option. Anisef (1973) further clarified this effect in a study of Ontario grade twelve students by stating that social-psychological factors are important determiners of choice. He concluded:

One logical conclusion that should be drawn is that accessibility to higher education is not simply a question of inequities in financial resources Our results reveal that such social-psychological factors as parental encouragement, self-evaluation and occupational aspirations are powerful determinants in explaining the educational decisions of students (p. 129).

Social-psychological factors such as those referred to by Anisef above are partly influenced by the attitudes held and lead to an impact upon the evaluation of options. These social-psychological factors may be representative of value orientations, affected by attitudes, which may be influenced by community characteristics.

Self-Evaluation

Porter et al. (1973) found a fairly strong relationship between self-concept and educational aspirations. It was concluded that:

A student's self-concept of ability is formed through interaction with parents, teachers and peers, and reflects to a certain extent the opinions formed about the student's academic ability (p. 66).

They then suggested that "it is not enough to be bright and to perform well. One must also see oneself as being bright and capable of performing well" (p. 65). Schoenfeldt (1968) reported that ability had direct effects on the post high school educational decisions of students. Generally, the higher the ability of the student, the better the chance that the student would opt for post-secondary education.

An Ontario study (Clark, Cook and Fallis, 1975) hypothesized that the low self-concept held by poor students is engineered by past patterns of socialization, lack of appropriate referents, parental encouragement, a feeling of control over events and confidence in the future. It seems then that self-concept is itself a mediating psychological variable between choice and post-secondary educational aspirations. The self-concept can be thought of or termed as the attitudes toward self.

In a study of traditionalism and career choice Wiseman (1982) found that when Newfoundland high school students were asked to compare themselves to their classmates academically,

those students who rated themselves among the best or above average were associated with non-traditional choice. Those students ranking themselves below average were associated strongly with traditional choice. When asked to compare one's chances of attaining success within one's age group, students indicating greater success expectations were associated with more non-traditional choice. The greater that one's comparative success expectations became, the higher the incidence of non-traditional choice. These results indicate that students use their peers as a reference group upon which to base their own expectations. The attitudes of youth toward themselves in relation to post-secondary plans may be influenced by this reference group as well.

Peer Group Influence

One of the most important goals of the high school students' life is to be liked and accepted by other students. Studies in the area of peer group influence are many and the findings vary a great deal as to how influential peers are in the young person's plans. Knill (1963) found that the most influential people who dominate the students frame of reference are their friends and peers. Williams (1972) found that students' educational goals are molded by socialization pressures in their family and school environments. Parents, teachers and peers were analyzed as influences. Parents most and then

teachers were found to be significant influencers. Peers were not found to be influential in this area.

Favalko and Bishop (1966) found that in a study involving Ontario grade twelve students, while the educational plans of students are greatly influenced by the plans of their peers, for girls of low socioeconomic status the plans of close friends have virtually no effect on their plans to go on to college. However, boys and girls of high socioeconomic status were very much influenced by the plans of their friends. Williams (1972) found that as male students move up from grade ten, the influence of parents on educational aspirations increases over that of both teachers and peers. He interpreted this to mean that:

If one can take response rates as indicators of knowledge, then the students know more about their parents' expectations than they do about their peers' aspirations and have least knowledge of their teachers' expectations. Moreover, it seems plausible to argue that the less one knows about the expectations/aspirations of a reference group the more one is likely to report them as being close to one's own aspirations (p. 122).

It may be important that the interpretation that the student places on peer expectations is a factor in deciding on post high school plans.

School Influence

There is some evidence that the particular school attended has some influence on the future plans of students. Knill.

(1963) reported that, "the values held by students are related to the particular school attended" (p. 9). Peach (1970) indicated that expectations of achievement differed when related to school location, grade and social class.

Cherry (1974) suggested that ambition is related to home and school factors - that the social comparison of the school is an important determinant of ambition. In the study it seemed that children from working class homes, in schools with mainly working class pupils, appeared to have less interest in breaking with working class occupational traditions than did similar children who were mixing with pupils from more varied home backgrounds.

The influence of the teacher was not seen by Knill (1963) or Friesen (1967) as being important.

Sex

The sex of the individual has been studied in light of educational and occupational aspirations. Narine (1971) found that a significant relationship existed between perceived parental attitude and the sex of the student. Bryans (as quoted in Barker, 1972) found significant relationships existed between the level of aspiration and the sex of the student. Slocum (1968) indicated a difference between sexes in the levels of educational aspirations of rural youths - while the girls seemed to have plans similar to their city counterparts,

the plans of males did not correspond to the plans of urban males.

Marini and Greensberger (1978) found the occupational aspirations and expectations of adolescents to be highly differentiated by sex. Girls perceived the male dominated jobs they aspired to as less accessible than boys perceived the female dominated jobs to which they aspired. However, both socioeconomic status and academic achievement had greater effects on occupational aspirations for boys and girls

Summary

It is obvious from this literature that no single variable, in isolation, can be said to explain the formation of aspirations. Therefore, students' aspirations need to be treated within the social system in which they live (Deosaran, 1976). This suggests that research in a localized context is necessary. The literature indicates that social-psychological, family, economic and environmental factors are associated with career aspiration, option and choice. These factors possibly influence the formation of attitudes related to career choice. The importance of attitude is twofold - attitudes form the basis of aspiration and option and also mediate between aspiration and option. The literature points to the need to clarify the influence of attitudes on the career decision-making process.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

This study involved the use of interviews designed to explore the attitudes of young people who had decided not to pursue post-secondary education in the immediate future. The parents of the students selected for this study were also interviewed as it was thought that the parental influence is a significant one with respect to post-secondary choice. The direct interview approach was selected because of the exploratory nature of this research and because the direct approach allows for the accumulation of a great deal of information on a topic. The interview approach allows for flexibility and is readily adaptable to individual situations. Given the nature of attitude, the requirement of an approach that is flexible is an important one. It was thought that no other approach would allow the degree of exploration obtainable through the direct interview.

Kerlinger (1973) specifies three main purposes for the use of the interview:

One, it can be an exploratory device to help identify variables and relations, to suggest hypotheses, and to guide other phases of the research. Two, it can be the main instrument

of the research. In this case, questions designed to measure the variables of the research will be included in the interview schedule. These questions are then to be considered as items in a measurement instrument, rather than as mere information-gathering devices. Three, the interview can supplement other methods: follow up unexpected results, validate other methods, and go deeper into the motivations of respondents and their reasons for responding as they do (p. 480).

The first purpose specified above relates to the intention of this research, as well as aspects of purpose three, that of going deeper into the motivations and reasons of the respondents.

The interviews were carried out by a trained counsellor and the techniques applicable to counselling were utilized throughout the interviews with both students and their parents. The techniques of counselling such as probing questions were used to get a deeper insight into the decisions made by students under study. In addition, the counselling approach was utilized to contend with the possible arousal of doubt and controversy in the student, because of the interview process. It was thought that for some students the interview process might generate some doubt over initial decisions and lead to a re-evaluation of previously held attitudes. The counselling model allows for the interviewer to help the student, and maybe his/her parents deal with this development and resolve these new, perhaps controversial ideas.

According to Kerlinger (1973):

Unstandardized interviews are more flexible and open. Although the research purposes govern the questions asked, their content, their sequence, and their wording are entirely in the hands of

the interviewer This does not mean that an unstandardized interview is casual. It should be just as carefully planned as the standardized one ... many research problems may, and often do, require a compromise type of interview in which the interviewer is permitted leeway to use alternate questions that he/she judges fit particular respondents and particular questions (p. 481).

A review of the literature related to factors associated with career choice and an examination of the model of attitude proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) led to the specification of certain areas upon which to focus in the interviews. The areas specified were used as a general framework and each area was explored fully with the students. The areas of concern are outlined in Figure 1 as part of the individual's attitudinal world with respect to the decision to attend or not attend post-secondary education. These areas included (a) the attitudes towards and of the family, (b) attitudes towards and of significant others, (c) attitudes towards post-secondary education itself, (d) attitudes towards self, and (e) attitudes towards the effects of economic and employment circumstances.

Parental interviews focused on many of the same variables as the student interviews. Parents were asked about their attitudes towards post-secondary education, economic and employment circumstances, attitudes towards their children within the context of post-secondary education, risks they saw as important considerations in the career choice process, and attitudes towards themselves as influencers of the decisions of their children.

2

The interviews with students and parents were tape recorded for later analysis and examination. The tapes were reviewed to determine attitudinal themes that emerged from the interviews. The analysis involved determining the numbers of students and parents who shared similar attitudes, the extent of the attitudes held, the underlying beliefs related to the attitudes held, the affect associated with certain attitudes, the attitudinal factors related to the students' intentions, and how each individual's attitudinal world applied to the research questions.

Typically the interviews with students were held over three sessions, on different days. Total interview time ranged from two and a half to three and a half hours per student. Total interview time differed for students because of variations in the respondent's willingness and ability to answer and clarify issues. Some students had little difficulty expressing themselves openly and clearly. Others required more time to formulate answers and to get across the feelings they had towards each of the ideas examined. It was for those students who had difficulty expressing themselves clearly that counselling skills were especially important. These techniques and this approach to interviewing allowed the student to reveal him/herself. The initial interview appeared to be the most difficult for the students. The following sessions tended to be more revealing and worthwhile. In sum, the students were more than willing to share their views, emotions and reasoning with the

interviewer. No student objected to being tape recorded once the purpose of the recording was given. In many cases the interviewer had to focus the responses of students onto the issue at hand. Indeed, the problem was more one of focusing the interaction than one of digging for answers because students willingly provided answers, as best they could phrase them, to the issues presented.

At the conclusion of each final session the students were asked whether they objected to having their parents interviewed. The students were assured that confidentiality would be maintained for both themselves and their parents. No students had any objections. Attempts were made to interview parents as soon after the final student interview as possible. In most cases the parent interviews occurred within two days of the student interviews.

Parents, like their children, all agreed to be interviewed. Arranging times for the parent interviews was more difficult than for the student interviews because the two parents were interviewed together, if possible. In two instances this arrangement was not possible. In one case the mother was the only parent in the household as the father had died recently. In the other case, the father was working away from home and returned only periodically.

Parental interviews were conducted over two sessions of about one hour each. Again, interview time varied because of the differences in the willingness and ability of parents to share their thoughts and feelings. However, even the most

'difficult' parents eventually responded and openly explained their ideas and feelings towards the issues of concern. Parents had no objections to being tape recorded.

The interview tapes of both students and parents were reviewed and analyzed after each session. The analysis was carried out for three reasons: (1) To evaluate the information on tape in order to determine whether issues had to be re-examined for further clarification, (2) to determine other relevant directions to move in during future sessions, and (3) to ensure that the responses given were true representations of student and parental attitudes rather than responses to 'leading questions' that may have inadvertently been asked. If it was suspected that prompting in a particular direction had occurred, the same issue was approached in a different way at a later session to see if the responses of the interviewee were consistent. If there was not consistency of response the issue was examined until the interviewer was certain that the true response had been identified.

A standard question form was not used. Rather each subset of the attitudinal world (see Figure 1) was examined until the interviewer was confident that each subset had been fully and completely explored, and that true, accurate responses had been obtained. The analysis of the tapes proved valuable in this regard. A standard set of questions was not used because of the need to explore many different areas in a flexible, effective manner.

The Sample

The sample for this study consisted of two groups of students from different parts of Newfoundland. One group of students was from a community which is referred to as Rural Town in this study. This is a fictitious name. Rural Town is located on the Northern Peninsula on the West Coast of Newfoundland. This community is characterized by high unemployment with many families living on welfare. The unemployment rate is higher than the average for Newfoundland. The employment available comes from the Gros Morne National Park and spin-off activities related to the Park. Other jobs are in service industries, fishing and unskilled labour. Some people work elsewhere and return to Rural Town for periods during the year. Traditionally, high proportions of graduating students from the high school in the community do not go on to post-secondary education. This is one factor which led to the choice of Rural Town as a community to examine within the framework of this study, as those students who are academically capable but who chose not to pursue post-secondary education were the focus of this research. The community has a population of less than 800 and is located approximately 120 kilometers from the nearest post-secondary educational institutions in Corner Brook. Corner Brook offers both a vocational school and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, which is an extension of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and which has courses

available for the first two years of university.

The second group of students came from an area which is quite a bit different from Rural Town. The second community is referred to as Urban Town and is located on the outskirts of St. John's. It is an area which has access to various post-secondary institutions including vocational schools, The Trades and Technology College, Fisheries College and Memorial University. In this regard it offers quite a range of occupational choices, each within easy commuting distance of Urban Town. In addition, this community and its environs offer much more in the way of employment opportunity. The unemployment rate is substantially lower than that of Rural Town. Most people commute to St. John's for work although many find work in the home community or other communities close by. The range of employment varies from professional and technical work to unskilled labour. Many young people from this area go on to post-secondary education, but significant numbers of academically capable students do not follow through with further education. This community was chosen as a contrast to Rural Town. The intent of this research was to determine if there were common attitudes shared by individuals who decided not to pursue post-secondary education. This requires having students from different communities to determine if the attitudes and their effect applies to more than just the specific, local area.

The graduating class in Rural Town had an enrollment of

38 students, whereas the grade twelve class in Urban Town had an enrollment of 92 students. The students interviewed for this study were selected from these classes. Selection involved the circulation of a form which asked students to indicate their plans for the following year. Those students who were planning to go on to further education were asked to specify the institution(s) to which they had applied. This exercise provided an outline of the students' plans. From this outline those students who were not planning to pursue higher education were identified. /

The academic records of those students identified as not going on to post-secondary education were examined to determine how many and which of these students could meet the academic requirements for attending post-secondary institutions. The academic requirement specified for this study was that the students defined as academically capable be able to meet or exceed the entrance requirements established for Memorial University of Newfoundland. If a student met these requirements he/she could also have met the requirements of other post-secondary institutions in the Province. The result of this examination was the generation of a list of students who were academically capable of going on to post-secondary education but who had chosen not to pursue this option at this time. Teachers and the counsellor were also asked whether the specific students selected were, in their opinion, capable of succeeding in post-secondary education. This was an attempt to further

confirm that the students identified were, in fact, capable of handling the academic aspects of post-secondary education.

The Rural Town sample yielded a total of 9 students, 8 males and 1 female, who met the criteria established for the purposes of this study. All of these students were interviewed. The Urban Town sample yielded 12 students who met the criteria. Eight of these students were interviewed. These 8 students were selected at random from the total of 12. Of these 8 students selected, 6 were males and 2 were females. All of the students selected agreed to the interviews. Because of the influence of parents on attitude, the parents of the students selected were also interviewed to determine their attitudes and how they viewed their children's post high school plans. All of the parents agreed to be interviewed.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1

Are there common, shared attitudes among academically capable young people with respect to the decision not to pursue post-secondary education following graduation from high school?

Analysis of the recorded interviews revealed that there are attitudinal themes which apply to the decision-making process of all of the students in the study, regardless of location. Students from the Rural Town sample expressed similar attitudes towards post-secondary education as their counterparts in the Urban Town sample. The areas of common attitudinal influence were related to the following themes: (1) Communication with parents and significant others, (2) lack of a specific aspiration and the importance of interest in a chosen occupation, (3) the necessity of time away from the educational setting, (4) risk taking and how risk is associated with post-secondary education, (5) values conflict, and (6) attitudes towards self. These themes will be illustrated as further research questions are clarified.

Research Question 1(a)

Do these students share common attitudes which reflect the influence of parents on choice?

The interviews with students and their parents revealed that the students were in a situation in which they gave and received little direct communication with others regarding career options. When asked about parental influence on their choice, students responded in a manner similar to the following quote from a young man who said:

They (parents) haven't asked me anything or commented on it (the decision not to pursue post-secondary education), so as far as that goes it's up to myself I told them what I plan to do and they had no objections.

All of the students said that their parents had little or no direct effect on their decision that they were aware of. In addition, these young people viewed the choice of what to do after high school as a personal, individual matter and a decision they had to make for themselves:

It's (decision) up to me.

I've got to decide on my own what I want to do because it's my future.

Other people can do what they want with their lives and I can do the same.

I know it's an important decision and I have to make it. No one else can choose for me.

My parents didn't say anything much when I told them I wasn't going to university. They just said they thought I should go in a year or two but that working for a while was

alright But all the way up through school they didn't have much to say about what I should do after school.

The reasons why these young people did not receive feedback from parents will be discussed in Research Question 2, which examines parental attitudes. The students did not seek parental support or feelings for several reasons. A young lady said that her reluctance to discuss career plans with her parents was tied to her perception that her parents didn't know how to help her make this decision:

My parents don't really know what I want. Sometimes they'll say why don't you do this, or do that, you know. But what they come up with is not what I'd like at all. Besides, they don't know much about the jobs they come up with So I don't pay much attention to what they say and I know it's no good to discuss my ideas with them because they don't really know much that would help me.

Another young man said:

Neither one of my parents has much education. My father is laid off most of the time. What do they know about selecting a good career?

A student from Urban Town said:

Me and my father don't talk much anyway. We really don't get along that well.

The reasons why students do not seek parental opinion are many and depend upon the student and his/her circumstances. The more common reasons given are reflected in the quotes above. A lack of student interaction with parents is most often the result of a feeling that parents are not that interested in discussing various career options to any extent, a feeling by

the student that the choice of career direction is his/her own to make, and a lack of confidence in the parents' knowledge of career options. The reasons may vary but the result is the same - a lack of parental feedback which students can use to help make choices. The interpretation of the lack of communication is left to the student to make as parents have not explained their feelings toward the decision to be made. This lack of communication with parents may, in itself, be a message to students leading to the attitude that career choices are to be made by oneself and the consequent feelings and developments created by such an interpretation may be harmful to the student and his/her parents in the long run.

Research Question 1(b)

Do these students share common attitudes which reflect the influence of significant others on the choice of what route to follow after high school?

The attitude that career choices are to be made by the individual is also reflected in the interactions or lack of interactions with significant others with respect to post high school plans. Peers and teachers have been found to be influencers of aspiration and career choice in some studies.

In the case of these students, the effects of teacher and peer influence had been minimized to the point that students reported that these 'significant' others had no part in influencing their choice.

The students interviewed had little discussion with teachers about their plans following high school. They had not approached their teachers for information or advice. In a situation where teachers do not actively seek out students and discuss their plans with them, the student is again in the position of not receiving feedback that might influence choice:

I suppose they (teachers) would help me if I asked, but I don't even know what to ask them about yet! Until I've got some idea I don't see the point in talking to them.

I haven't talked to teachers about what to do next year. I don't know. I just haven't felt like it and they haven't said anything to me.

I don't know what the teachers expect me to do. I think they would rather have all of us go into university or trade school next year, but I don't know what I want to do.

The students maintained that in most cases their peers had not tried to influence their plans. In cases where friends had tried to alter the intentions of the individual, the attempts were unsuccessful:

My friends have their plans and I've got mine. What's right for them isn't necessarily right for me.

When it came to deciding for next year I thought about myself and decided that my situation is different from theirs. I wouldn't do something just because they are.

I don't really have a career in mind either so I didn't see much point in going away because some of my friends do.

I didn't really talk about my plans with my friends. I didn't think it was much good to talk about something I can't go through with next year anyway.

When they talked about going to university I didn't pay much attention.

The young people had made the decision to work rather than attend post-secondary education. No amount of peer pressure could change their minds about this intention. One student said:

Some of my friends think I should get a student loan because I would have a better chance of getting one than they would. They think I should go right on to university this fall. I don't think I should go until I know what courses I'm interested in and until I've saved the money They didn't change my mind.

The choice of career direction has been left in the hands of the individual, without an extensive information base upon which to make decisions. Such a situation may lead to a lack of effective decision making, which seems to be the case for these students as they have no career area in mind, nor do they have any idea of what they expect from a career.

The comments reflected attitudes towards the influence of significant others. These attitudes towards this influence include the attitude that the individual has to make his/her own choices and so the help and opinions of others is not necessarily desirable. The individual's situation is unique and, therefore, what others say is not accurate for that situation. A person should have some idea of what career he/she would like to pursue before seeking the aid of others in assessing this career as an option.

The students explained their ignoring the viewpoint of others in several ways. The feelings expressed about others

reflected the idea that the student felt he/she was in some ways different from his/her peers. He/she had greater and more diverse factors to consider than others did. Others seemed to be less restricted by financial concerns. Others were not as anxious as themselves about leaving home. Others were more confident that they were doing the right thing by going on to post-secondary education.

To make matters more confusing these differences appeared to have been felt for many years. Possibly a lack of communication with their peers, teachers and parents about their feelings of how they were different from and similar to others only added to the felt differences. A lack of sharing true feelings led to a greater isolation. Students thought they were alone in the predicament of post-secondary choice:

It's hard to explain but they (classmates)
don't seem to be as worried as I am. They
seem to know exactly what they are going to
do I wish I felt like that!

It became obvious that not only had the students little information about careers, but they had not explored their feelings towards career choice with others. Therefore, important self and significant other comparisons were not made.

Research Question 1(c)

Do the students in the study have common attitudes towards post-secondary education?

The students in the study were in favour of post-secondary education, provided certain prior conditions were met. The conditions specified by the students were concerned with the choice of a definite program to follow, the necessity of time away from education, the desire to minimize risks they perceive as associated with post-secondary education, and the resolving of values conflict.

Throughout the interviews it was readily evident that these students had not, as yet, formed a specific aspiration as to what career to pursue. Very little career exploration had been carried out. The students held the attitude that there was one 'right' choice for them, and that a right and definite choice of vocation was a prerequisite to actions directed towards obtaining education or training in the chosen area. These young people felt that the one right choice of career is one which they find very interesting and which offers excellent job opportunity following training. A course of study which does not embrace these two properties is seen as unattractive and undesirable. Until the student selects a specific career goal, he/she sees no point in engaging in post-secondary education because to do so would be a waste of money, time and effort:

I don't see much point in going in there
(university) if I'm not sure about what courses
I want to take.

If I don't know what I want to do I'll just be
wasting time.

I don't think I'd try very hard unless I was really interested in the program.

I'm not sure what I should do. If I did any old courses I'd probably end up disappointed I think I should have a good idea about what I can do well.

I need more time to decide on a career. Right now I don't know what training will give me the best job and it's not much good to go in for something that won't give me a job afterwards.

These quotes illustrate the fact that these students, as a group, feel that having a career selected is a must. The idea of engaging in post-secondary education on the basis of interest alone is not enough. At the same time a career selected solely on job opportunity is not satisfactory. The career selected must be a combination of these two and until the appropriate decision is made, post-secondary education will have to be delayed. Students hope that more time and work experience will help them arrive at a suitable choice:

What's the use for me to go into university and spend two or three years trying to decide what degree to go for? I'm better off working until I decide.

I can't seem to get interested in any of the courses offered at university and trade school. I think I'll have to check other provinces and schools to see what's around. I can do that over the next year or so.

These students do not see time spent in post-secondary education as time which can be spent exploring possible career alternatives. Exploration and the 'right' choice must be established before any form of post-secondary education is entered into

Invariably the students interviewed saw the necessity of having a year or more away from education before pursuing training of a post-secondary nature. Even those students who did not plan to attend post-secondary educational institutions at any time said that if they were considering further education, they would definitely wait for a number of years before making such a move. The reasons for needing time away from education varied with the individual. The most common reasons are reflected in the following quotes:

I've spent thirteen years in school. I need a break! I'm tired of having to do homework and writing tests. A year or two off would be good right now.

"There's some things about school that get to me you know. There's a lot of pressure all the time to do school work. A lot of foolishness goes on too. Like some teachers I can't stand. Some subjects are boring and I'm not interested in them. I need time off before I can go through more of this.

I've had to study hard to get through school. I think I should be allowed to have time off. Summer holidays are alright but I think I need more time off before I go into university because I know I'll have to work even harder than I did in school.

I don't know for sure what training I would like to go in for. A year or two off, working and making money would be good because I can have more time to decide what I want to do. I think I'd have trouble if I went right away.

These quotes express the attitude that a break from education is a necessary occurrence if they are to do well later. The advantages of a break include relief from the

pressures associated with school work, the opportunity to earn money to support self and later education, and the provision of more time in which to think through options and form some definite aspirations or plan of which route to follow.

It was difficult for the interviewer to determine whether these reasons were real attitudes or rationalizations. At times the interviewer felt that the explanations were attempts to rationalize. At other times the reasons seemed to be true representations of attitude. It was possible that the students themselves could not distinguish between whether these were true, felt attitudes or attempts to explain their decision to others in seemingly logical ways. It is also possible that these explanations were related to other, perhaps deeper and more personal attitudes, especially about self. To examine these possibilities for each student would require much more time and counselling of a highly personal and involved nature.

The students were very conscious of risks which they perceived as associated with post-secondary education. The risks can be placed into three general categories: (1) Financial risk, (2) risk of an incorrect choice of career direction, and (3) risk associated with leaving home. Financial risk is discussed in the answer to Research Question 1(c). The third area of risk, leaving home, applies to the Rural Town sample more so than to the Urban Town sample because the Urban Town students can easily commute to the centers of post-secondary education, whereas the Rural Town students would have to live away from home.

The students, regardless of location, felt that post-secondary education is too risky an undertaking if the individual does not have a firm career area in mind. They felt that the student must be aware of what his/her abilities are and in which types of jobs they would be most successful. Without this self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work the student is not likely to make a good career choice, in their view. Until the person has explored these aspects of career choice the decision should be postponed to avoid the possible wastage of the individual's money, time and effort. These students feel that they are not ready to enroll in post-secondary education because they have not felt a keen interest in a particular career area and have not explored options to any significant extent.

The attitude of these students is that post-secondary education is a venture that risks too much time, money and effort when they are not sure they will be willing to complete the post-secondary option selected. It was felt that if they went into a training area without sufficient interest, motivation and thought they would not be successful.

The students said that:

I think I should have a program in mind before I go in for it (university). Otherwise I might end up changing my mind and my courses might not be any good for a new area I liked. If I'm definite on what I want to do I won't have to worry about changing my mind because I made the right choice in the first place.

It's better to be really sure before you go or else you won't put in the study and work. I've seen a lot of people from here go in to university and trade school without any idea about what they really want to do. Before you know it, they've flunked out or else they couldn't stick it out and came home.

If I was really interested in a course I'd go. But I don't know what to do. I'd be taking a chance if I went.

Some of the others in the class are going away in the fall without being sure if that's what they want to do. I don't think they'll stay. When I go I'll be ready and I know I'll put the time in because I'm ready. I don't want to fall into the trap that they will.

I think working will give me time to learn more about what I like and don't like. Right now I don't have experience in anything really.

The students from the Rural Town group expressed apprehension about leaving home, whether to attend post-secondary education or to find work. Overall, they felt that the adjustment of moving away to work should be easier emotionally and financially than leaving home to continue schooling. The money earned by working was a concrete, observable reward for leaving home whereas the rewards for going on to further education tended to be less directly observable. Leaving home to work would not be as traumatic because these young people felt that by working they would be independent, supporting themselves, experiencing the work environment, and also supporting their families, if not by sharing of earnings then by the family having one less person to support on a limited budget. The attendance of a

post-secondary school was viewed as more of an emotional risk because the rewards were less obvious and might not have been powerful or immediate enough to keep the student on the educational path.

A risk, as these young people saw it, was the possibility of becoming dissatisfied with being away from home because they were not really prepared to leave in the first place. The students anticipated greater adjustment difficulties in the educational setting because of the pressures of the academic environment compounding the negative aspects of leaving home. They felt that the pressures of the work place would not be as great or difficult to handle:

Sometimes I feel like I can go on and do alright at trade school or university or whatever, but then I keep thinking what if I'm wrong? What do I do then?

If I'm working the money would keep me there. I know I'd find it hard but it would be worth it to earn some money.

It scares me to death (leaving home)! I'd rather get work around here but I probably won't.

I think I'd find it hard leaving home, especially if I went to St. John's for school. I wouldn't get home much because it's so far away and it costs a lot to travel. If I worked I probably wouldn't have to go so far. Besides I'd have the money to visit home more often.

It's difficult leaving home. I'm sure it'll take a while to get used to it. Pressure to study and go to classes would make it even harder. There'll be pressure at work too, but I don't think it would be as much.

These students hoped to reduce the perceived adjustment to being away from home by living with relatives while working.

A 'home away from home' was viewed positively because of the reduced cost and the emotional support anticipated from relatives. The students said they would be more at ease about leaving if they were moving into a situation that they were, at least somewhat, familiar with. This situation would reduce the risk or fear of not being able to adjust to the new environment:

Being with my relatives would be a lot better than being out on my own.

Well, I sure would save more money and besides I get along pretty well with them (relatives). My cousin is around my age so I could hang around with him.

I don't think I could handle being out on my own all of a sudden. I'd prefer to have people around I knew.

I would be lonely because I haven't been away from home before. At least with my uncle and his family I wouldn't be alone.

Although these students felt apprehension about leaving home and although it was a risk factor they had considered, they maintained that this factor, in and of itself, was not the major reason for cancelling or postponing post-secondary education. Other factors were more important.

As the interviews were conducted it became evident that these students had and still were attempting to come to terms with values that were not in agreement with each other. In most cases, values the students held were in conflict with the worth they attached to education. The students had the attitude that education was of importance not only to their own futures, but

to the futures of all young people:

A good education is the best way a young person can get anywhere these days.

Without an education you don't have much chance of success in this world.

I know education is important, especially when people need more and more qualifications to get jobs.

The only sure way to guarantee a good future is to plan education well and do your best at it.

The students felt that to obtain this important educational goal other values of importance to them would have to be set aside. These conflicting values that detracted from the perceived worth of education included the value that it is wise never to owe money, that one is responsible if he/she helps support the family, that a person should be capable of supporting self, that there is a definite, right career for an individual and that the individual must have a great interest in the chosen field. To choose to go immediately on to post-secondary education was viewed as violating these values. The decision conflict resided in how to weigh and evaluate the values the individual held and resolve the discrepancy that was created by the conflicting values:

I know education is really important but there are other things that are important to do. Like helping out your family and supporting yourself.

I think a person should know which career is best for him/her and have a lot of interest in the career before he/she will get the most out of it.

I tried to decide what to do for a long time. I finally made up my mind to wait a while because that seemed best compared to what could happen if I went on to university.

I thought about a lot of things but in the end it seemed more practical to work than to go to trade school or university. It was a hard decision because I think having a trade or something like that is important.

The students decided to postpone post-secondary education indefinitely or until a later, more advantageous time. Other values and considerations outweighed the importance attached to education for the immediate future. That education was still seen as valuable was evidenced by the fact that many of the students interviewed were planning to carry on with their education later. The question remains as to how many of these students will actually do as they say and go on to post-secondary education at a later date.

Research Question 1(d)

Do the students in this study have similar attitudes toward self which may have influenced the career decision-making process?

One of the requirements of the students selected for this study was that they be academically capable of progressing on to post-secondary education if they so desired. Therefore, it was not surprising to find that these students, in general, had confidence in their academic abilities. This confidence was expressed in quotes like the following:

Sure, I can handle the courses if I put my mind to it.

If I was interested in a certain career I'm sure I could get good marks on it.

My marks are pretty good and always have been but I haven't really worked as hard as I could. I think that I would do alright if I went to university.

These students felt that they were socially competent, well adjusted, young people. The self-concept expressed by these young people was a positive one, reflected in their perceived ability to interact well with their peers and with adults:

I get along well with others in my class. I've never had a fight with any of them. We hang around together outside school, too.

Teachers seem to like me.

I don't have any trouble making and keeping friends.

I'm into team sports like volleyball and basketball and other school activities so I must be able to get along with others.

Tied to self-concept was the view that these students had of themselves as being beneficial, helpful and supportive members of their families. Many of these students saw work as an opportunity to be even more beneficial to the family by adding financial resources that they earned to the total family purse:

I do what I can around home to help out.

There's six of us kids in the family so Mom's busy all the time. I'm the oldest so I work a lot around the house when I can but school work takes a lot of my time so I can't help as much I probably should.

If I could work for a year or so I'd be able to save for my education and at the same time give Mom and Dad something to help out.

I know that if I worked I'd give money to my parents. They haven't got much. Any contribution I made would be appreciated for sure. My brothers and sisters would get more then, too. Right now I hate to see other people getting just about anything they want and us not having any luxuries at all. I'd feel great if I could give my family things.

The students did not appear as examples of students with low self-concepts nor did they seem to be hindered by debilitating attitudes toward self. The way in which attitudes toward self may have influenced the decision not to pursue post-secondary education lies with the view these students had of seeing themselves as supporters of the family. Working would enable the young person to provide financial aid to his/her family and as such he/she would be fulfilling what was perceived as a very valuable role. The immediate consequence of this supportive role was seen in a more positive light than the consequences of continuing education.

Research Question 1(e)

Do these students have similar attitudes towards economic and employment circumstances that may have an effect on the career decision-making process?

The majority of students in this study were from families in which the employment history of the father was often interrupted. Of the 17 families involved, only 2 of them had fathers who were permanently employed and had been employed.

consistently over the years. All of the parents had very little formal education and virtually no training of a post-secondary nature. Most of the fathers were employed seasonally and received government assistance when not working. The mothers were homemakers, for the most part. Only two of the mothers worked outside the home and these were low-paying jobs that were temporary, rather than permanent.

This limited educational background and employment history had placed tremendous financial limitations on these families. There was very little money to spare. As such, the parents were not in a position to contribute to the costs of post-secondary education for their children. The result was that the student had to borrow through student aid, work to obtain funds to pay for further education, or not go on to post-secondary education at all.

The students did not want to borrow money. The attitude held was that to be in debt, even for education, was a negative condition and a situation that should be avoided as much as possible. This attitude was reflected in such statements as the following:

I don't want to owe money.

Paying for education right now means having to borrow too much money.

A student loan is my last resort. I'd rather work to pay for my education.

If I could work for a year or so I could save enough money to pay for my education I wouldn't finish a course and end up paying back loans for years afterwards.

I'd rather finish school owing no money or as little as possible. I'd hate to finish owing thousands of dollars.

These quotes summarize a general feeling among these students against borrowing for education. Associated with this attitude was the risk these students perceived of not being in a position to pay back a loan if they did not obtain employment following training. High unemployment, especially among young people, has caused these students to be cautious about putting their faith in a job possibility after post-secondary education. This fear of not being able to get a job afterwards meant that money borrowed for education would be very difficult, if not impossible, to pay back. This liability was seen as too great a risk to accept:

I'm afraid that if I borrowed I wouldn't be able to pay it back because I might not have a job. Then where do I go to get money to pay back the loans? It seems to me that I had better save the money for my education If I got a decent job now I think I might stick with it rather than go on to trade school.

If I was pretty sure of a job I wouldn't mind borrowing some money, but the way things are these days I don't know. I might end up wasting the time and money and end up worse off than I am now. At least if I worked and paid some of the fees myself, I wouldn't have the loans hanging around my neck.

Work is viewed with a more favourable attitude because to work means avoiding the risk of borrowing and not being able to repay loans. The information these students had on the current economic situation had led them to believe that education does not guarantee a job and that borrowing would entail a

further risk when economic conditions were so unfavourable.

It is interesting to note that these students knew very little about the student aid program. They had not inquired about the application procedure, the conditions of such loans, or the conditions of repayment. They held the attitude that being in debt is to be avoided and so were not inclined to explore student aid as a viable alternative. It appears that the very students for whom student aid was established and who could benefit the most from such financial assistance were not perceiving this option as an attractive alternative, despite viewing education as a valuable and worthwhile endeavour.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of parental attitude on the decision about what to do following high school?

Analysis of the recorded interviews with the parents revealed that their attitudes did have an effect on the attitudes of their children towards post-secondary education. However, the expression of these attitudes was not direct and concrete, but rather was implanted by indirect and often subtle communication with their children. That the parents influenced the attitudes of their children was evidenced by the high degree of consistency between parental and student attitudes. In all cases, it was found that the attitude of the parent was

closely reflected by the child. At the same time, both students and parents agreed that they had shared little communication concerning the post high school plans of the young person. It seemed that the young person learned the attitudes of his/her parents through means which were unconscious to both parent and child. The consistency of parental and student attitudes is discussed in Research Question 2(a).

Parents also demonstrated a high degree of attitudinal consistency with each other. Just as the students in this study shared similar attitudes, so did their parents agree with one another. This relationship is examined in Research Question 2(b).

Research Question 2(a)

Are parental attitudes towards the post high school decision consistent with the attitudes of their children?

This study revealed that parents, for the most part, were in agreement with their children with respect to considerations concerning post high school plans. In a sense, there was very little tension or friction between the parents and their children because of the relatively high degree of consistency in attitudes towards post-secondary education. The parents were interviewed around the same general themes as their children and as such, attitudes towards the following topics were

obtained: communication with the child, the need for a break from education, risk factors associated with the choice of career and the economic consequences of career choices, values conflict, and the repercussions of the young person leaving home.

Parents were able to express a variety of factors which influenced their lack of communication with their children with respect to career plans. One parent said:

I haven't got much education, I've worked in the woods for most of my life, when I could get the work, and don't know a lot about all the new jobs ... computers and that. If the young fellow comes to me I don't know what to say or what to tell him to do.

This sense of helplessness was manifested by many parents. The economic pressures of high unemployment and the difficulty of advising their children about good career possibilities for the future left parents with a feeling that their ideas might no longer be valid. Parents felt that it was better to refrain from giving advice about a subject which they felt they knew little about:

I'm not sure about what career she (daughter) should go for. You hear so many different things on the news and read about the poor economy. I don't know enough to tell her what she should do.

The parents thought that the school was preparing their children to make post-secondary career decisions. As such, they believed parental assistance and input was not required and in some cases they viewed it as potentially harmful:

The teachers at the school can help my son better than I can. They've got education and they are with him a lot of the time, probably more time than I am. I think they're helping him decide better than I can.

What I think might not be right because everything is changing so fast. What I say one day might not be true the next I'd rather say nothing than give advice that might end up wrong in the long run.

Parents felt, as their children did, that the young person had to make his/her own career decisions if they were to be committed to following through with the career choice. Any attempt by the parents to force the child to follow a certain career path was seen as a futile gesture by the parents. Parents felt that an attempt to force change would be disastrous because of the resistance they would encounter from their children:

They (students) are old enough and have been in school long enough to know what to do for themselves.

He has to decide himself. If I tried to get him to do something he didn't really want to do, he would get his back up and I'm sure he wouldn't try as hard as if he decided himself.

She's pretty strong-headed. I don't think I could make her do anything she didn't want to do. It's useless to try and change her mind.

The factors discussed above, and others besides, accounted for the lack of communication between parent and student regarding career plans. The result was that students did not perceive high expectations from parents. This was a message in itself, as it put the important career decision solely in the hands of

the student. The expectation that the student should attend post-secondary education was not obvious and hence the tendency to opt for post-secondary education is diminished.

Parents tended to view post-secondary education as not necessarily a good thing. They thought that it was possible for post-secondary education to be of long term benefit for those people who were lucky enough to find work afterwards. For the immediate future it was perhaps not the best option for their children. This can be interpreted as a normative belief that pressured the student to examine other options.

In some cases it seemed that parents saw post-secondary education as an option for their children. However, they failed to communicate this belief to their children, maybe because of a lack of conviction towards this choice. The parents weren't certain that their beliefs in post-secondary education were accurate and realistic. Therefore, the expectation that their children would go on to further education was not communicated.

With respect to the necessity of a break from education, the parents were sympathetic to their childrens' need for such a respite and often supported this intention. Quotes that reflect this view include:

He's had to work hard all the way up through school. He used to study every night. I can see where he wouldn't want to go at it all over again in the fall.

My God, she brings home ten times the books we did when we went to school! She comes in the house with her arms full. I don't think there's any need of that. She deserves a break from the books after all this time.

Parents quoted very similar reasons for time away from education as their children. The benefits of a year or more off, with the young person working, were perceived by parents and students alike as positive outcomes that made the attending of a post-secondary institution much less attractive.

The parents of the students also held the attitude that there is one right career choice for an individual. Young people have to choose wisely and have to be sure of what they want:

She's better off working if she don't (sic.) know what she wants to go in for. She would only be wasting time and wouldn't have a job afterwards.

If she's interested she will do okay but right now she don't seem interested in any course in particular. She mentions something every now and then but nothing special that she seems excited about. I don't think she knows what she wants to do So, she's probably better off if she waits a while until she's sure.

I hope he figures out something to do later on. We don't mind him taking a year or two off as long as he works. Who knows, maybe that's the best thing for him, especially if he got a job that was a good one, But until he knows something about a course it's just as well for him to keep on working, I suppose.

I think it would be good for him to work. He needs time to decide on what he wants to do with his life. He can decide whether he wants to keep on working or do something else. If he went to St. John's to go to school without knowing what he wants, there might be trouble. Once he's ready he can make the right decision.

The attitudes of both parents and students agreed as both groups felt that there is a specific, right career to

enter. Until the student is ready to make this choice he/she would be better off working as this would provide more time to think through the decision to be made, to be more certain of the career to choose, to provide money for the young person and his/her family, and to provide savings for later education if this path is chosen.

In most cases the risks associated with post-secondary education which were perceived by the parents paralleled those stated by the students. Parents were apprehensive about their children expending time, effort and money to achieve something that they were not convinced was the best alternative:

It'd be an awful thing if he went away the fall and didn't do well. He'd have to borrow, which he don't want to do and end up with nothing. If he knew what he wanted to do it wouldn't be so bad, but where he don't know yet it's a chance that if he went he might not like it and be right back home with nothing to do. It's better for him to wait until he knows and then go because there would be less chance of problems then.

There's jobs around if you go in for the right thing, but you have to be sure of what you want to do beforehand. If you don't pick right you could end up with no job after years of training.

I'm not positive that the young fellow should go to university in the fall. I think he should work so that he wouldn't have to get a loan if he decided to go later on. It wouldn't be good to owe a lot of money once he's finished. That's too big a chance these days.

There's not many jobs in the trades now Not much construction on the go. I think he'd be better off working for a while until things start to change around here I'm pretty sure he could find some small jobs to do and if he doesn't he can work on the mainland.

The parents felt that economic and employment conditions were such that selecting a training program was something of a gamble. They felt that their son or daughter could find at least temporary work in other areas where they thought employment opportunities would be better. There seemed to be hope that conditions would improve with time and that young people would then be more likely to select a promising career. Work, for the young person, was an attractive alternative as it would reduce the financial risk perceived to be attached to further education. The risk of a poor choice of career was also seen as reduced because the young person would have more time to think through and explore options.

Although parents, like their children, believed that education could be important to an individual's future, they could see other values to be important as well. They tended to agree with their children's assessment of the situation and to feel that other values outweighed the value of education, at least over the short term:

He's only planning to work for a year or two. After that he'll go because he will be in a better position to go. Right now there's too many other things to consider besides education.

One time an education guaranteed a job. Not any more. It's still important but it's not everything.

I thought often about what my daughter should do. But, when you look at it, it only makes sense to work if she can. She can gain a lot by working that she won't get if she went on to more education right away.

The best thing he can do right now is work. He'd be helping himself and might even be able to help his brothers and sisters a bit.

The resolution of conflicting values was an important part of the decision-making process for these parents and their children. For these people the decision favoured work as opposed to continuing education. The predicted value of education was outweighed by the collective values which favoured the postponement or cancellation of post-secondary training.

Parents in this study were concerned about their children leaving home. They thought that their young people would have a period of adjustment to deal with, no matter what decision was made. It was felt that the adjustment to continuing education would be more difficult than the adjustment to work, especially if the young person had to move away from home to pursue educational goals. The parents were often not sure whether their children would be able to handle such a change in lifestyle effectively. This concern was much more evident among the Rural Town parents than the parents from Urban Town. This was probably because of the differences in location and distance that the student would have to contend with.

In general, the parents would have preferred that the young person live at home or close to home, whether he/she chose to pursue education or employment. For the Rural Town students, to live at home and carry on with post-secondary education would have been impossible. It was also unlikely

that they would be able to find employment in the home community. To that end, the parents of these students were contacting relatives in an attempt to find work for their children:

He should be able to get work away. He could live with my brother's family and be better off than being on his own.

I would worry if she were on her own or living with strangers She would be safer with relatives.

We have talked to relatives all over. They would be glad to have him stay for a while We're waiting to hear about a job.

I wouldn't let him go on his own.

Allowing their children to venture out on their own was a risk for these parents. They preferred that their children be in familiar surroundings, with people they knew and trusted.

The above quotes indicated that parental attitudes towards post-secondary education were consistent with the attitudes of their children. This consistency suggested that there was little controversy between parents and child with respect to the career plan. In such a situation communication was found not to be as extensive as it might be in a situation in which there was disagreement between parents and child. Perhaps both students and parents somehow perceived themselves to be in agreement. Therefore, indepth communication about career plans was not required.

Research Question 2(b)

Do the parents of the students under investigation possess similar attitudes with respect

to the post high school plans of their children?

During the formative period of this research it was not known to what extent the attitudes of students were similar with the attitudes of other students who had made the same decision. A high degree of consistency was found. A high degree of consistency was also found between parents and their children. This question addresses the degree of consistency among parents. It was found that parents did share common attitudes with each other, despite differences in location. The parents of the Rural Town students had similar views as their counterparts in Urban Town. As was evident in the preceding section, they shared like views on economic influences, values, the necessity of making the right career choice and not pursuing post-secondary education until the correct decision has been made, the need for students to have a break from education, the risks associated with post-secondary education, and views on their children leaving home.

Research Question 3

Do the students under study have background features that might impact on attitude, and hence, on aspiration and career plans?

The students in this study and their families were selected based upon the decision of the graduate not to pursue post-

secondary education following high school. They were not selected based upon similarities of background. However, during the initial stages of the interviewing procedure it was observed that the students shared many common background factors. The history of the families was examined because of these apparent similarities, to obtain an overview of possible influences of attitude. Studying these background factors revealed interesting trends which seemed to point to the contention that there exists a 'subgroup' of people who, perhaps because of similar histories, have formed attitudes that make the attendance of post-secondary educational institutions a less likely development for their children. The common background factors discovered may be helpful in identifying this subgroup and planning interventions to increase the possibility that these young people, who are capable students, will engage in some form of post-secondary education which will lead to better future employment possibilities. The common factors have not been fully explored in this province and more complete investigations may lead to the implementation of interventions that will be effective in dealing with limiting attitudinal components.

Research Question 3(a)

Are the families in similar financial and employment circumstances?

It was found that, with the exception of two, the families

interviewed had very similar financial and employment histories. The two families which were characterized by stable financial backgrounds were both from the Urban Town sample, which was to be expected since this region is a much more prosperous one. The other Urban Town families were very similar to the Rural Town families with respect to financial factors, as these families were found to be characterized by a history of unemployment and low financial security.

This finding suggests that there is a specific group of students who have attitudes towards post-secondary education which have been shaped in part by their socioeconomic background. This effect cuts across communities and may be applicable to a great many families, no matter in which area they live. Even in a prosperous community it was found that families with similar financial histories shared common attitudes with financially similar families in poor communities.

This finding agrees with other research (Friesen, 1969; Porter et al., 1973; Schoenfeldt, 1968; Sewell and Shah, 1967) which indicates that career decisions are related to socioeconomic factors. Higher socioeconomic status tends to mean a greater likelihood of a student opting for post-secondary education. For the parents and students in this study, the evaluation of aspirations and options seems to have been affected by the attitudes held. Developments which could provide immediate, observable economic benefit for the student

and his/her family were positively regarded. Events that could delay the achievement of this economic goal were less positively evaluated. Perhaps because of living for so long in low socioeconomic circumstances anything which held the promise of relief from the economic strain on the family was evaluated positively.

Research Question 3(b)

Do the families share similar educational backgrounds?

Although students were not selected on the basis of the parents' educational background, it was found that these academically capable students who had chosen not to pursue post-secondary education came from families in which the parents had very little formal education and virtually no training of a post-secondary nature. The highest educational qualifications were found in a parent who had been in the armed forces and had received some training in a trade while in the armed forces. In many cases the parents had not completed high school, which may partly account for the unemployment history discussed above.

The effect of this lack of education was alluded to during the interviews when parents said that because they had little education and technical experience, they felt inadequate as advisors for their children. This led to the parents leaving the career education of the child in the hands of school personnel and the assumption that the school was adequately

preparing their children to make career decisions. This limited the communication and discussion between parent and child, possibly leading to the child having no clear idea of parental expectations about education. There also appeared to be a lack of pressure from parents about what career direction the young person should move in. Given this lack of pressure, the young people selected the less threatening alternative - to stay close to home and attempt to locate work of some kind.

The findings of this study with respect to the effect of the educational level of parents on career choice agree with previous research (Anderson, 1980; Breton, 1972; Osborn, 1971; Rehberg et al., 1967). In general, the higher the educational level of the parents the more likely their children were to proceed with higher education. The fact that the parents had some level of post-secondary education seemed to have led to the expectation that the children would also pursue this goal. The parents in this study had never been exposed to post-secondary education themselves. There was possibly a fear of the unknown world of post-secondary education. Indecision because of unfamiliarity with this option may have been communicated to the student as attitudes which expressed a lack of expectation that the student would pursue this option.

Research Question 3(c)

What is the influence of role model on the attitude towards career direction and choice?

The immediate families of the students interviewed were all similar in that there were no role models to reflect the advantages of post-secondary education. The parents were not highly educated. Older siblings had not engaged in post-secondary education. Many of the young people from the communities had not elected to go on to post-secondary education. The people that the young person could relate to were people who had not selected the option of going on to further education.

The importance of a role model has been referred to in the literature and may have been a very important factor in the decisions made by the young people in this study. The absence of a role model connected with post-secondary education may have also limited the information available to the student. This led to the likelihood that a student would not pursue a field that he/she knew very little about. As one student said:

None of my family has ever gone to university, trade school or anywhere like that so they don't really know what's involved. They can't tell me anything.... When I ask them what they think they mumble about this and that and what they've heard out around. But they really don't know.

Another said:

My older brother thought about going to university. But he changed his mind and went to Toronto instead to work. He enjoys it up there and says he can get work for me where he works. So, why not?

The role models that students were exposed to in the family reflected the advantages of work. The importance placed on work may have been magnified by the poor economic circumstances of the family.

Research Question 3(d)

Has work experience on the part of students had an effect on their attitudes towards post high school plans?

The students in the study who had obtained part-time or summer employment, or who had some experience with work in the past, had decided that post-secondary education was not an option for them. Three of the students had part-time work experience. Most of the students had not obtained or participated in formal work of any sort. It was those students who had not ruled out later education entirely. These students maintained that they were not going on to post-secondary education until prior conditions were met. So, there was still the possibility of post-secondary education at a later time. Students with work experience, however, had already rejected post-secondary education for now and in the future. It seemed that the work experience may have, in some way, polarized the choice of the student towards a rejection of further education. Although this was a very small sample, this finding was in agreement with another study which found that work experience tended to result in a decrease in the perceived options of students (Wiseman, 1982).

Research Question 3(e)

Does the sex of the student bear any relationship to the outcome of the post high school decision, within the groups of students studied?

It was found that after selection of the students for this study, the great majority who met the criteria for selection were males. Only one person in the Rural Town sample and only two people from the Urban Town sample were female. This tended to suggest that proportionately greater numbers of academically capable males do not favour post-secondary education compared to academically capable females. Again, the sampling procedure did not allow for conclusions to be drawn on this point, but the results do point to sex differences. The possibility exists that the attitudes held for females and post-secondary education may be different than the attitudes held for males. The choice of the 'right' career may be more limiting for males than females. Possibly females do not see themselves as potential supporters of their parents and siblings and so are more willing to accept financial risks associated with post-secondary education. Whatever the reason for the difference, it is certainly an area worthy of further investigation.

Research Question 4

Are there other differences about attitudes between the two groups of students from different parts of Newfoundland?

The main focus of this study was on identifying areas of

commonality among students who had made the choice not to continue on to post-secondary education following high school. However, observations of differences among students were also made, although on an informal, 'just in passing' basis. Differences were found between the two groups of students, from the two different areas. Within a group, very few attitudinal differences were noticed.

Research Question 4(a)

Are there differences in the proportion of students who have elected not to pursue post-secondary education, in each setting?

It was found that in the Rural Town sample, approximately 24% of the graduating class met the criteria established for this study - that they be academically capable students who had decided not to attend post-secondary education. In the Urban Town sample, approximately 13% of the graduating class met the criteria. This indicates that proportionately greater numbers of Rural Town students had decided not to pursue post-secondary education when compared to their counterparts in the community of Urban Town, at least as far as these two samples are concerned. While the difference was not statistically significant, based upon conversations with educators in both communities, it would seem that this trend is a typical one which has applied in the past. To determine this more accurately would require further investigation.

Research Question 4(b)

For the two groups studied, are there differences in terms of whether or not post-secondary education is still seen as a possibility, if not immediately, then for some time in the future?

Another difference found between the two groups of students related to the decision of whether or not post-secondary education was ruled out entirely or was seen as a possibility in the future. Students from the Urban Town sample tended to view further education as not possible in the future, whereas the Rural Town students tended to hold the belief that they would attend post-secondary education in the future, if conditions were right for such a move. This finding indicated that students from the more economically well-off community were more likely to reject post-secondary education completely. This may have been due to the greater availability of jobs in this area and the perception of students of less need for further education because they could get work without it. The Rural Town students, maybe because of fewer employment possibilities, may have seen further education as more of a necessity for themselves, if they are to ultimately be successful. Education had been ruled out for now, but they might entertain the educational possibility at a later date, provided certain conditions were met and that this option was a viable one.

Research Question 5

What attitudinal factors are specified by the students as being most influential and important in their decision of not to pursue post-secondary education?

Without exception, the major factor which students identified as most important in the decision not to continue with further education, was the economic factor. These students felt that they could not afford post-secondary education and that at the present time this option was not perceived as a viable one. Associated with this factor were the attitudes that the student should partly or entirely finance post-secondary education themselves, that a student loan was too great a risk given the economic and employment opportunities available, that the young person if he/she did borrow, could end up with a considerable debt and no way to repay this debt, that supporting the family financially was a positive statement about self and a responsibility felt by these students, and that the unpredictable nature of the work environment made any career decision a risk in itself.

Next to financial concerns, students cited interest and state of readiness for further education as the most prominent considerations in their decision. These students, in general, felt that they were capable academically of handling a variety of career areas, but as yet had no specific area in mind for

themselves. Without this interest and preparedness to enter a career field, the students felt that they would be better off waiting and working until they arrive at a course or program decision.

Parents also felt that the financial considerations were the most important factors. They agreed with their children in this respect and also on the necessity of the young person knowing exactly what he/she would like to do as far as further education is concerned.

This ranking was achieved by asking students to indicate which factors they considered to be most important in arriving at their decision. Parents were asked to indicate which factors they thought were most critical in the career decision-making process.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate attitudinal factors related to the decision of academically capable young people of not to pursue post-secondary education.

Application of the Model

The Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) model of attitudes was selected as the theoretical basis of this research and can be used to explain the results obtained in this study. According to this model, beliefs are the building blocks upon which attitudes are formed. The beliefs a person holds are learned through experience, observation, and the exposure to information. The person's attitude toward an object or event is based upon the most salient beliefs he/she has about the object or event. Therefore, there must be a processing of information.

The students and their parents in this study based their decisions upon their attitudes which have been derived from the beliefs held. The decision to not attend post-secondary education was based upon numerous beliefs related to the financial predicament of the family, the consequences of student loans, the selecting of the 'one and only' right career, the

world of work, and the present economic situation. The student, along with the parents, had the extensive task of sorting through these beliefs over time. From these beliefs they developed attitudes that functioned to help make decisions. This is not to say that this task was an overt/conscious one. Rather, it was a gradual evolution of attitude which was affected by new information, changing intention, and feedback received as a result of certain behaviours.

These students had evaluated beliefs, rejecting some, forming new beliefs, and enhancing others. A difficulty confronted the individual because of the fact that beliefs are based upon available information and hence beliefs may be 'distorted' or false, in reality, because the information available is not accurate or complete.

It appears that this limitation came into play for the students and parents involved in this study. For example, when asked about the extent of their occupational knowledge, parents and students said that they had, in reality, very little factual occupational information. In addition, the students had made little effort to collect career information. This relates to these same students having not yet formed a career aspiration in terms of selecting a possible career area of interest. They were academically capable and felt that they could, if they so desired, deal with the subject material. However, they were not motivated or interested enough in a career to feel prepared in other ways, for such a step. This was important, as Wiseman

(1982) hypothesized in a study of traditionalism and career choice, that exploration of careers and the active seeking of occupational information follows the formation of aspiration. It might therefore be suggested that until the students in this study formed what they perceive as a valid aspiration, they would not be likely to have explored information related to education or other options. The result was a narrow, restricted information base leading to the student's perception of few options. Limited information could mean inaccurate career beliefs and hence, the development of attitudes which were not truly reflective of the range of possibilities open to the student.

A similar situation applies to the parents of these students. The parents said that they based their opinions about post-secondary education on details they had heard primarily through the media. As this information tended to be pessimistic and discouraging, these parents were at a loss as to what to advise their children. They felt inadequate as advisors and so refrained from pressuring or suggesting options to their young people. The resulting lack of feedback from parents was, in itself, a message that was communicated to the student and integrated into their beliefs and attitudinal world. The message of non-intervention was interpreted by these students and became associated with the attitude that the choice of a career direction was completely in the hands of the student alone. Whatever path the student selected would probably

not be opposed by the parents and so the student might be less likely to make the effort required and to accept the perceived risks of further education.

For these students, vocational information from the school was limited. One school did not have a counsellor and in the other the counsellor's time was at a premium because of the number of students involved and other priorities than career guidance. Students were not provided with information and the initiative to search out career information was left in the hands of the student. Since these students did not make exploratory efforts, the question of motivation arises. When asked why they had not consulted with the counsellor or teachers, the students indicated that financial concerns, family factors and employment prospects had dictated a certain plan of action. Since the decision was already made in the light of these factors, the students did not go through the effort of searching through information or consulting with others. They felt that because post-secondary education was not an option for them for the next year or so, if at all, they did not have to decide yet on a specific career area. Hence there was a lack of self-initiated career exploration.

An important question is whether information programs would be adequate, in and of themselves, in dealing with this lack of information and the absence of self-initiated career exploration. It seems likely that the presentation of information would have to be accompanied by special programs designed to incorporate the new information into the belief structure of

individuals. By making the information part of the belief structure student attitudes could then be influenced by the information presented. Belief structure can influence values. If new information is made part of the belief structure, values would then have to be reweighed in light of new beliefs. In order for the career guidance program to be effective it would have to assist students in reweighing values.

Another valuable source of feedback on post-secondary education that these students had not been exposed to was that of having a role model within the family who had experience at the post high school level of education. Instead the role models within the family reflected a lifestyle which has been characteristic of the family in the past. As Krippner (1963) has pointed out, although students may prefer different vocations, they will reflect the family's occupational and socioeconomic level. To break free of this pattern requires much effort and thought on the part of the young person. The role model information and feedback from others within the family contributes to the formation of attitudes and, in this case, these attitudes led to at least a temporary rejection of the higher education alternative.

Attitudes towards an object or event are based upon the salient beliefs about that object. The interviews revealed that the salient or most critical beliefs concerning career plans were associated with the financial limits of the family, the poor economic and future employment possibilities, and the

advantages of immediate work rather than the value of post-secondary education. As these more salient beliefs form the attitude, there was a predisposition on the part of the student to select the immediate work option as opposed to the post-secondary option.

From the above examples and other references in Chapter IV, it becomes clear that these students had not been exposed to significant information that would favour a career oriented towards and built around post-secondary education. The result was a decision to postpone or eliminate further education. Without extensive information upon which to base decisions, students had not had the opportunity to fully evaluate and modify their attitudinal world in light of other points of view. The consequence was the possibility that these academically capable students will be lost to higher education of a technical or professional nature. Young people who now choose to postpone education may later decide that because of circumstances changing attitude, to forego education altogether. Students who have the potential to go on and be successful in the technical or professional areas will end up competing in a poor job market with many, many other unskilled workers.

Again, is information alone going to be enough to remedy the situation? Probably not. The information has to be made a part of the belief structure. The reweighing of values that results from this new belief structure must be dealt with as well.

When confronted with the lack of jobs for unskilled workers and the likely event that they would not find work, these students tended to justify their decision by maintaining beliefs that there were jobs available if one was willing to look extensively, accept poor working conditions, move elsewhere and accept lower wages. In addition, they said that trades people and university graduates have difficulty finding jobs as well. Another justification or belief took the form that even if they didn't get work, they wouldn't owe substantial sums of money. This belief network generated attitudes that decreased the possibility of the individual choosing post-secondary education and, conversely, increased the possibility of opting for immediate employment.

The literature on the influence of peer pressure on career aspiration and choice seems to vary from studies which indicate that peers are very influential to studies which found that peers were not influential at all. The students in this study indicated that their decisions were not influenced by their peers. Students indicated that they realized they had beliefs, and hence attitudes, which were different from their friends who planned to go on to post-secondary education. The beliefs of their peers were interpreted by the people in question as not accurate for themselves because of different personal circumstances. While these contradictory beliefs and attitudes were appropriate for others, they were not accurate for themselves personally. These students tended to evaluate

their beliefs in the light of their own particular situation and used this to justify a difference in attitude with their friends. In addition, there were others who had reached the same decision as they had, and so they were not alone in preferring work to further education.

An important part of the Fishbein and Ajzen model is that once an attitude is established it may have an effect on the formation of new beliefs. It is conceivable that attitudes the individual formed earlier in life with respect to the family's financial situation and the relative value of post-secondary education and work have influenced the interpretation and formation of new beliefs with respect to the post high school decision. Contradictory information may have been evaluated and modified or rejected because of earlier attitudes. In a sense, the attitudes held biased new beliefs to maintain consistency with already held attitudes. Certainly it has led to non-exploration. Given the narrow information base of these students it becomes even less likely that there will be contradictory information which might lead to a re-evaluation of beliefs and attitudes. A great deal more significant information, from valid referents, would be required to overcome the attitudinal predispositions of these students. This also points to the need to have this information presented as early as is reasonably possible and made part of the belief structure.

A component of the Fishbein and Ajzen model utilized here

is that a person's behavioural intention is a function of two factors: (a) attitude toward the behaviour, and (b) the subjective norms. A person's intentions are a function of certain beliefs which influence attitude. The attitude towards following through with a specific behaviour is related to his/her beliefs that carrying out the behaviour will lead to certain consequences and these consequences must be evaluated. The subjective norm refers to beliefs that certain referents have about whether a person should or should not perform the specified behaviour.

The students in this study possessed attitudes towards going on immediately to ²post-secondary education that related to the consequences of such an endeavour. An evaluation of consequences led to the conclusion that such a plan was an unwise one at the time. The consequences of higher education, in the view of these students, had negative aspects such as having to obtain a student loan which they might not be in a position to repay once their training has been completed. This would result in even greater financial difficulties for the family. On the other hand, positive, immediate consequences were associated with work. Among these were the saving of money for possible future education, support of self, support of family, independence, a break from education and concrete material rewards.

The subjective norm is the result of normative beliefs and the motivation to comply. The beliefs and attitudes of certain referents were important here. The key referents for

these students tended to be their parents moreso than anyone else, even though there was little direct communication about plans with the parents. There did not seem to be pressure on the students to move in a certain career direction. As mentioned earlier, this could have been related to the parents' feelings of not being adequate advisors. The student was left to interpret the referent's expectations and from this derive subjective norms and make this important decision from these interpretations. Taken in this light, the less risky option, work, was selected.

Whether there was an abundance of overt communication or not, these young people knew that their parents were not in opposition to their plans to work, but rather tended to favour such a path. The interviews revealed that parents and students shared many common attitudes towards post-secondary education which indicated that, over time, the young person had realized or complied with the normative beliefs of his/her parents. The students had concluded, as had their parents, that it was quite alright, and in fact, advantageous to pursue employment as opposed to post-secondary education. The lack of a role model who reflected higher education meant that there was even less socialization pressure to live up to academic potential.

It is possible that these students did not approach teachers about career plans because they suspected that teachers would favour a decision to pursue post-secondary education. Discussing plans with a teacher might have resulted in having

to deal with subjective norms which were in opposition to the norms of the family. Avoiding teacher input led to less pressure to follow through with apparent academic potential.

An aspect of the Fishbein and Ajzen model involves the carrying out of the specific behaviour. The actual behaviour is important because by following through with an intention, feedback is provided. This feedback may lead to the creation of new beliefs which may in turn influence attitude. For these students it was likely that some will not be able to find employment, others will find work that will encourage staying in the work force, and still others may work but find their work unsatisfactory and return to education. Each of these situations will provide new information which will alter beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviour. What the specific changes will be depends upon the individual and his/her circumstances.

In this study, students who had part-time work experience were less inclined to opt for post-secondary education. This finding may have relevance for those students who said that they had not ruled out post-secondary education entirely. The intention to go on to further education at a later time might not be realized because of factors related to work experience. Students need to be made aware of the likely possibility that they would not return to education if they found work. The values and feelings of the student with respect to this possible change in intention would have to be explored. Such exploration

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and clarification might allow the student to assess his/her true commitment to higher education. It would form a central part of the student's evaluation of the implications and consequences of choosing the immediate work option.

In the Fishbein and Ajzen model, attitudes lead to a set of intentions that indicate a certain amount of affect toward the object or event in question. The overall affect expressed corresponds to his/her attitude toward the object or event. The dominant emotions displayed by these students towards post-secondary education were fear, apprehension, uncertainty and conflict. There was a very significant risk factor inherent in all the expressed attitudes towards further education. The students feared the possible negative consequences of participating in higher education, such as the risks of the wastage of money, time and effort. They were apprehensive as to the eventual value of their post-secondary efforts, given their perceptions of the employment future. They were uncertain as to what specific career area they desired to take part in. They were in conflict, to a certain extent, as to which path to follow as they valued education, but were not sure whether the advantages of further education would be realized for themselves, personally.

The affect expressed towards immediate employment tended to be more positive in nature, reflecting the intention to follow this route.

The students in this study had not discussed or clarified

with others their feelings about further education. The affective aspect of attitude towards career choices had not been explored. Students felt that their feelings of fear, uncertainty and apprehension were somewhat unique. Others did not appear to be experiencing the same kinds of emotional conflicts. The result was a degree of emotional isolation that contributed to an inability or unwillingness to discuss feelings about career options with others, including parents. This indicates that career guidance programs have to deal with not only information and beliefs but feelings as well. It seems apparent that feelings change as beliefs and values change. Programs that attempt to change beliefs and values are obligated to deal with the affective changes that occur as a result of such interventions. An approach might be to expose current feelings before attempting to implement interventions. Then the student would have to be assisted in dealing with new feelings and emotional conflicts that might develop. This would be particularly so if new feelings and values contradicted those of the parents.

As was related in the review of the literature, family background and circumstances are important determinants of career choice. In view of the model presented, the family influences the beliefs and attitudes of the individual. In addition, the family contributes to the subjective norm to which the student refers. Therefore, events that occur in the family are observed by the student and these events have an impact on the attitudinal system.

Family attitudes towards the world of work, the educational system and the individual him/herself will influence the direction in which he/she moves. As the families in this study tended to reflect similar socioeconomic status, occupational level, work values, job knowledge and expectations it can be argued that there were similarities in socialization pressures upon the students in these families.

The value of work for these families is immense. They have few financial resources and any development which is directed towards the immediate enhancement of these resources was viewed as positive. There was also a belief in the worth of higher education, but these benefits were seen as long term and risky in some respects. This left the door open for the student to choose the more tangible work option.

The decision of the individual student is a result of the interaction of many beliefs and their corresponding attitudes. The attitudinal world of the student predisposes the young person to interpret information, form beliefs and modify attitudes in a particular way. This effect is a mediational one, leading to the selection of an option. For the students in this study, their attitudinal world was influenced by the factors discussed earlier, such as the economic situation of the family, and because of this influence the perception of options has been limited.

Conclusions

Despite the sample groups being taken from two very different communities, it was found that there were sub-groups within both communities who displayed significant similarities in terms of background and attitudes, towards post-secondary education. Similarities of background included the following:

1. The employment history of the fathers were characterized by seasonal employment in many cases, and period of unemployment.
2. The mother did not work outside the home.
3. Both the father and mother had little formal education, in many cases not extending to high school.
4. Siblings of the student in question had not attempted any form of post-secondary education.

In addition to family background similarities, the students tended to reflect the following characteristics and behaviours:

1. The student had little communication with parents, teachers or peers concerning further education.
2. The student had not initiated any kind of career information search.
3. The student had very little knowledge of student aid programs nor had they attempted to locate information on this topic.
4. The student had not decided on a career area of interest.
5. The vast majority of students who had decided not to.

pursue post-secondary education were male.

6. The student felt an obligation to help support the family economically.

7. The student felt somewhat isolated from others in terms of being in a different family situation, having different feelings and having to consider factors that others did not.

8. Both the student and his/her parents were or had experienced values conflict. The conflict revolved around the value of education as opposed to the value of work.


9. The students' parents had little confidence in their ability to advise and direct their children about issues of career choice.

The students also reflected similarities of attitude towards post-secondary education. The parents tended to agree with the attitudes expressed by their children, indicating that they had had some effect on the formation of attitudes in their children. The most important attitudes which the students and their parents considered were the following:

1. The economic risks of post-secondary education were too great at the time.

2. It was better for the young person to work, at least for the immediate future. The consequences of work were more positive and so this was the best alternative.

3. The young person should not enter a post-secondary program until he/she was sure about the best choice of career. Until this was known, further education was not advisable



because of risks associated with this uncertainty, such as dropping out of a program due to a lack of initial commitment to this option.

4. To borrow for further education was not a favourable plan because of the perceived uncertainty of being able to pay back the money borrowed.

5. The decision of whether or not to attend a post-secondary institution was for the individual student to decide and that influence attempts by the parents would be rejected.

6. A break from education was a positive occurrence because of the necessity of coming to terms with career choice. This time off would allow the student to accomplish this goal. Because of the great amount of work expended on education previously there was a need for a rest from these pressures.

7. To leave home for further education was a risk unless the student was to be with people and in circumstances that were known to the family. The student had to be truly prepared and ready for the break from home.

Tied to these attitudes was the values conflict that these students and their parents were attempting to come to terms with. There is a sense of the value of education, at least a high school education, but the worth of further education was not as readily seen. Attempting to decide whether the value of further education was worth the risks associated with the effort, time and money required was a problem of considerable importance for these people. A lack of knowledge of the consequences of a chosen alternative

further served to confuse the issue.

The students who met the criteria for inclusion in this study were overwhelmingly male. Only two of the students were female. This could be tied to the values issue as males may see financial gain as more valuable than educational advancement. The self-concept of the male who sees himself as a supporter of the family might contribute to the subjects tending to be male. The male perception of the career decision may be tied to the traditional role of the male in the family.

Students who experienced part-time or summer employment unanimously rejected post-secondary education as a viable alternative for now and in the future. Their work experience seems to have made them more committed to a particular option, work, than students who had not had work experience. The students without this experience tended to think that post-secondary education might be a possibility at some point in time, but not presently.

Implications

The results of this study have implications for the educator who is concerned with aiding students overcome the negative effects of attitude and progress with their education. Such aid would be for the good of the person's family and the individual him/herself. To help the student, educators must clarify issues, deal with values that are in conflict, provide information about the alternatives in question, and assist the parents to understand the young person's options. For both the students and parents, the counsellor must help them see how their attitudes have affected the decision-making process, particularly the limiting effects of the attitudes held.

The effect of any influence attempt to change attitude will be greatly enhanced if the influencer understands and recognizes the primary, salient beliefs of the person he/she is trying to influence. This study reinforces this contention as it was found that the beliefs of the students affected their decision, and that many of these beliefs were tied to the family. The beliefs were found to be based upon limited and inaccurate information. To be effective the educator must be able to change these primary beliefs. Probably the most effective method of change lies in the presentation of factual information that challenges the beliefs held. In this way, the student has to evaluate the new information and somehow fit it into his/her attitudinal world. This might involve change in belief or the re-evaluation of already held ideas. In either

case, the student is forced to at least consider the new information and make some decision regarding the belief. For students who do not feel motivated to search out career information, the presentation of factual vocational information might lead to this consideration.

However, such a presentation of information would be most effective if current beliefs were exposed first. The student would then have a better comprehension of his/her motivations and of the way in which he/she evaluates career aspirations, options and choices. New facts could then be presented. It is likely that the presentation of discrepant information would result in conflicts of beliefs and values. The student would have to be assisted in dealing with this conflict, especially if the new facts violated the current beliefs of the student as well as his/her parents.

Feelings aroused by the presentation of conflicting information and the resulting new beliefs and values would have to be dealt with by the student. Assistance in coming to terms with these feelings might be the most effective of all possible interventions.

The students must be made to evaluate the long range effects of their post-secondary decision. It seems that the students and parents in this study did not closely examine the long term effects of the decision not to pursue further education, or the lasting effects of the immediate work option.

The greater the number of intervening processes, the greater the probability of changing attitudes. Therefore, the successful influencer will use a number of approaches, such as presenting factual information at frequent and reasonable rates, dealing with values conflicts, developing decision-making skills and examining the consequences of limiting attitudes. In addition, because attitudes are learned, the skills and knowledge that contribute to decision making and careers should be developed as early as possible.

This study implies that there is a greater need for communication between parents and the school. Parents feel inadequate as advisors and feel that the school is handling all aspects of their childrens' post high school plans. The result is a lack of insight into the career decision implications. Information for parents, as well as for students, would be helpful here.

Change in parent beliefs and attitudes should be sought. Perhaps a series of seminars initiated by the school counsellor and directed towards the parents in question, might be an intervention of merit. The seminars could be organized around exposing parental beliefs, attitudes and feelings. New factual information could then be presented and integrated into the parents' belief structure. Armed with factual information and modified beliefs, the parent would probably feel more confident as an advisor and more willing to discuss career plans with their children. Another approach, though more time consuming, could involve the counsellor making contact with the parents on

a one-to-one basis. Home visits by the counsellor, or parent visits to the school to discuss the plans of the student would lead to greater parent involvement in the career decisions of their children. The intent of both approaches would be to lead parents to realize that the best opportunity their child has to escape the unemployment problem is through post-secondary education. This realization could lead to greater expectations for the student and the perception of broader aspirations and options.

Educators in rural, traditional-type communities are especially open to the effects of the limiting nature of attitudes in these communities. Knowing that they must get at the beliefs and attitudes of the student and his/her family is important if they are to help their students take advantage of their possibilities. This reflects the need for better articulation between the school and parents. The responsibilities of educational institutions are increasing. The diversity of student plans and how attitudes effect these plans is a complex issue, and one that is complicated further by the misinformation circulating concerning career prospects. This diversity points to the importance of cooperative articulation among students, parents and schools.

The complexity of the students' value orientations implies that a need exists for further research in this area. Educators, especially counsellors, are in a particularly good position to assist students in becoming committed to a value orientation

that is relevant and beneficial to the individual and which leads to a maximizing of ability.

The results of this study indicated that values need to be changed with respect to the following:

1. The value of post-secondary education. Parents and students attached positive values to a high school education. However, they were not certain of the value of post-secondary education. Many believed that post-secondary education would not lead to a job. There did not seem to be a realization that post-secondary education was the best opportunity for long term employment and financial gain. The immediate, short term gains seemed to be more important. Values have to be changed to focus on the positive, lasting benefits of post-secondary education rather than the fleeting, short term gains of uncertain, unskilled employment possibilities.

2. Values associated with perceived risks of post-secondary education. An increase in the worth placed on post-secondary education could lead to a set of values that predispose the student to accept the risks of higher education. Students and parents saw investing time, money and effort on post-secondary education as risky because of a desire, in part, to improve the financial predicament of the family. Immediate work held great worth for these families because of economic benefits and because they had to live for such a long time in limited financial circumstances. Thus, the attraction of financial improvement is greatly inflated. Yet, the student

who chooses unskilled work is likely to be unemployed in the future. Parents and students seem to have ignored or rationalized away the risks of choosing the immediate work option. Values associated with the risks of the work option would have to be clarified. This would allow greater objectivity in choosing between options.

3. Values associated with the support of the family.

Students and parents valued the young person as a supporter of the family. This put pressure on the student to choose the work option. This value system would have to be modified so that those concerned realize that if the person chooses immediate work his/her support would most likely be short term. The best alternative for contributing to the family would be through steady employment. The way to get this employment is through post-secondary education and training.

4. Values associated with borrowing for education. The students and parents held values which lessened their willingness to borrow money for education. This value structure was associated with feelings that opposed going into debt. There was a fear of greater financial difficulty for the family. Values would have to be modified so that education is seen as worth the possible consequences of borrowing. Student aid would have to be seen as a worthwhile strategy that would assist students in obtaining educational goals.

5. Values associated with the student making the 'one and only' right career choice. Knowing career was a valued

state. Until the individual was aware of his/her true vocation, values dictated other actions besides education. The danger of this value structure is that students might not return to education once they were in the work force or had been away from education for a period of time. The 'right' career may not be revealed because of limited career exploration and self-knowledge. Values which foster a perception of higher education as being, in and of itself, a period of exploration and growth might lead to a greater inclination to pursue the education option.

The above are value systems which were readily apparent in this study as needing change if post-secondary education is to be selected. The student would need assistance in dealing with modified and new values. The resolution of conflicting values could be facilitated by the counsellor through such interventions as group sessions and individual counselling.

Suggestions for Further Research

Some possible areas of research which developed out of this study include the following:

1. The need for further research into value orientations of students and their parents and what the effect of these values are.
2. The need to examine why there was such a difference in

the number of males who decide to cancel post-secondary education, as compared to females.

3. To further examine the effects of the work experience on the post high school plans of youth. This study indicated that work experience limits the post-secondary options. Further research is needed to clarify this effect.

4. To study people currently in university or some other form of post-secondary education who had made the choice not to enter post-secondary education immediately following high school. The purpose would be to examine their motivations for attending post-secondary education.

5. To examine differences between students who choose not to pursue post-secondary education with those in similar situations who decide to go on to further education.

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